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CHARLES B. COCHRAN

THE SECRETS OF A SHOWMAN

BY

CHARLES B. COCHRAN

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FOREWORD

THE failure of Charles Cochran is gigantic and immensely reparable. Already repair is begun, and C. B., to give him the term of affection, mounts on stepping-stones of his dead self to more than ever " phenomenally successful " things. Not that the present reversal will be his last. To be a beggar at dawn, prince at high noon, and at dusk a beggar again—such is the essence of every showman's existence. Whether the Abbey or whether an obscure mound will depend upon the clock. The hour determines.

And in what, after all, has Cochran failed that really matters ? " Money lost, little lost," runs an old jingle. " Honour lost, much lost ; pluck lost, all lost." Where, as with C. B., honour is untarnished and pluck has moulted no feather, the rest surely is bravery and high-hearted resumption. Stevenson's words come to mind here : " He had gone to ruin with a kind of kingly *abandon*, like one who condescended ; but once ruined, with the lights all out, he fought as for a kingdom." C. B.'s battle was made harder by the armies which rushed to his aid. Hundreds of letters poured in containing cheques, bank-notes, even postal orders, from the many whom Cochran had befriended in the day of distress, who now did not forget him. To return these, each with a personal note of thanks, was an immense labour. This accomplished, C. B. rushed off to Paris, and was in negotiation for fresh ventures before the

wires to America, Australia, and wherever Cochran's enterprise is known, had ceased tingling with the tidings of *débâcle*. The failure who lets the grass grow under his creditors' feet is a failure indeed; that Cochran will never be.

The next undertaking was this huge compilation. It seems to me to be a wonderful book; at least it has given me the sense of wonder. Wonder at the size and scope of the general design, which is like an Arabian Nights' palace as it might be devised by Mr. Horace Goldin, or other magician of the music-hall. Wonder at the exhibits which such a palace enroofs—the myriad baubles and parti-coloured gewgaws which are your showman's triumphs. Wonder at the marvellously stored memory, at the simple candour which informs these faëry tales, at the detachment which, in the midst of so much trouble, could command so much ease of telling. I betray no secret when I say that Mr. Cochran really did write his own book. The style in this case is the man; and the artless way the writer prattles of £20,000 offers, and risks big enough to turn your oil or shipping merchant grey in a night, is but a reflection of his simple, natural self. C. B. is still a child who has never grown up; he plays with fortunes as carelessly as an infant with its mother's diamond necklace. Take that moment in his life when, on his own admission, he had £80,000 to play with. What did he do? What, reader, would you or I or any other sane person do with such a sum? Look round, I imagine, for some three-per-cent. stock, or at most three and a half. Four, I take it, is risky. I remember a book of memoirs in which Sir Squire Bancroft alleged eighty thousand reasons why he and his lady retired—every one of them lodged in the Bank of England! But in the bright lexicon of Cochran's permanent youth

there has been no such word as prudence. With that £80,000 he must needs tinker up the inside of the Old Oxford Theatre. Then follows this emotionless sentence: "We had an accident to the proscenium arch, and it looked as if the whole building might come down." I take this to be the keynote to the whole recital, the very calmness of which makes me giddy. To read this book is to behold a tower swaying in the wind: there is no moment at which the hero's fortunes may not come toppling down.

Fearful successes go hand in hand with horrific failures, and both give a catch in the breath. Both set jogging the arithmetician in us. Take the Carpentier-Beckett match at the Holborn Stadium. The two boxers drew £8000 between them, and we shall be safe in allowing a further £1000 for odd expenses. Two, if you like, or £10,000 in all. The gate was £30,000. Not bad picking for a single evening! Then take the Wilde-Moore "clash." The purse was £5000. Add £1500 for the hire of Olympia and £1500 for advertising and incidentals, say £8000 in all. I give the rest in C. B.'s words, "As General Pershing left the box, he said to me, 'This is indeed a great day for the friendship of America and Great Britain.' The receipts for the night were £14,205, 8s. 6d." So that it was a great day also for the friendship of C. B. and his bank manager. What, again, must have been the profits on the revue, *As You Were*, when the authors' royalties amounted to £21,000? Yes, there are mountainous heights as well as precipitous depths in this book.

Where are we to look for the fatal flaw? Read these Memoirs carefully and we shall find it. The first trace appears early on, when, as a young man, Cochran was called in to help Richard Mansfield out of certain pecuniary difficulties. Mansfield's collection of artistic odds and ends

was to be sold, and Cochran " secured the assistance of a number of my literary and artistic friends, and with their help compiled the catalogue, printed on costly paper and embellished with ribbons and seals, which was in itself almost a work of art." " A work of art "—this is the key to the trouble. The popular view of the showman is of an exploiter alike of the talent of artists and the credulity of the public. But Cochran has not the debauched mentality of most of his kind. He is at heart as inveterate an artist as any of those whom he has " presented." Hear him declare that to have done the Cuadro Flamenco in London was " worth the £5007 which I lost on the ten weeks' season." His deficit on *Mayfair and Montmartre* topped £20,000. Why ? Simply because C. B. has always possessed not only the temperament of the artist, but also the mind of the child to whom all that glitters in a theatrical entertainment must be pure gold. In *Mayfair and Montmartre* he pursued the same policy as in the *League of Notions*. For the latter piece he tells us that he ransacked America for silks, and had other materials specially woven for him in Lyons. Batik work was specially done in New York, and lamps of great price, unobtainable in this country, were borne to him across the Atlantic in, I doubt not, specially chartered ships. C. B.'s eye was " still deceived with ornament." But that of the public was not. And when Delysia, who was the egg-cup to this crust of apple-pie, collapsed, Charles alone was surprised that his great show should go phut. Spectacle by itself is not worth a row of stalls, and this C. B. has never realised.

Delysia's illness was one of many pieces of ill-luck. In introducing *Chauve-Souris* to London, Cochran had the misfortune to be before his time. But there was one disaster which was purely fantastic, and in its fatal coincidence belongs not to real life but to the novel. I remem-

ber a boyhood story by—I think—Rider Haggard, in which the most dire catastrophes overtook a Viking because from him in his wounded condition was withheld the message of a friendly Berserk. The story of Cochran's breakdown and Mr. Brady's well-intentioned, luckless withdrawal from the Carpentier-Dempsey affair reads almost as tragically. But, plead what excuses we may, the business of a showman is to make money, not to lose it. Your broken-down essayist has a moral right to the dole; nobody expects him to do other than starve. But the Cochrans of this earth are expected to feed upon ortolans and peacock's tongues; humble-pie is a mortification not only to them, but to the gaping world. It is to C. B.'s eternal shame as a showman—whatever it may be to his glory as an artist—that he lost money over the Russian Dancers, the Bat Theatre, and others in the continental galaxy. Shall I scold him that he squandered no gold on the encouragement of the British Drama? No. For Charles Cochran is my friend and, all things considered, I am proud of him.

JAMES AGATE.

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THE
SECRETS OF A SHOWMAN

CHAPTER I

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ONE day at a luncheon party I heard one of our most brilliant conversationalists say: "It would be an epoch-making day if one afternoon in Piccadilly the newspaper placards, instead of beating at our imaginations with 'Exciting Scene in the House,' or 'Amazing Love Drama,' or 'Sensational City Failure,' sounded the high note upon qualities we are supposed most to admire in our ordinary workaday moments; sincerity, self-denial, sympathy, and loftiness of character."

"I doubt, though," he added reflectively, "if the newsvendors would approve, particularly that newsboy who, absorbed in the combats to the death in the last scene of *Hamlet*, observed, 'What a night for specials!'"

I thought of this man's words just before I began writing down the incidents of my own life which hold the most vivid place in my memory; and it struck me that the world might learn more, perhaps, by studying a man's failures rather than his successes. But then I reasoned that

it is as great a service to amuse as to instruct; and as that has been my life's philosophy, I shall endeavour to make it the keynote of these reminiscences.

There hangs in my office in Old Bond Street a theatre bill which, so it seems to me, was the determining influence that caused me to make the stage my profession. It is the very wordy playbill of the pantomime *Sinbad the Sailor*, produced by Mrs. Nye Chart, at the Theatre Royal, Brighton, and it is dated 29th December 1879, when I was a boy of seven. On it appears the name of Mr. Arthur Roberts, who was the chief comedian, who, as soon as I saw him act, became my idea of what a stage funny man should be. It was my first visit to a theatre, and my imagination turned on plays and scenery for the rest of the Christmas holidays. True, at Lindfield, the Sussex village where I was born and lived with my parents and my nine brothers and sisters, we had the fairs, and I had gazed absorbed at the painted men and girls who sang and danced outside the Richardson shows, while the showmen invited the public to "Walk up! walk up!" And once or twice I had been inside to see *The Old Oak Chest* and *Maria Martin* and *Pepper's Ghost*. But this was a real theatre; it was something when my father promised to take the family to see the pantomime we anticipated for weeks; and after that great experience we had all to be taken to Brighton Theatre Royal every Boxing Night.

Arthur Roberts definitely decided me to become a comedian.

My first school was at Lewes, where I was a weekly boarder. One boy who attended was the son of the Governor of Lewes Prison—his name was Crosskey. When we walked out, two by two, we nearly always passed Lewes Prison, and I remember seeing the black flag floating aloft the morning Lefroy, the murderer, was hanged.

Then I went to Eastbourne. A younger brother and myself became boarders at a preparatory school, about fifty boys, kept by a venerable, white-bearded pedagogue

named Esam. His wife, a lady with corkscrew curls, had almost as much to do with running the school as he had. Invariably, when the school assembled for dinner, Mr. Esam would ask in loud, expansive tones: "Annie, my dear, what are the viands?" and almost invariably her reply would be: "Roast beef, boiled beef, and curry." After which, again in resonant tones, Mr. Esam would invite Mrs. Esam to "ask a blessing, my dear."

I do not claim to have had scholastic success at that school. My main interest was in white mice and lizards. We had a debating society, and every week, alternatively, there was a debate, or some one read an essay. When my turn came, I said my essay would be on "Mammalia," and a notice was put up on the board. At dinner-time that day I heard Mr. Esam say, in his booming, apostolic way: "I see the discourse to-night is on 'Mammalia,' by Cochran Senior. I think he could give us a better discourse on 'Disorderly Conduct!'" I disliked the old man from that moment. However I was not there long. A 5th November episode led to my being expelled. A boy named Arthur Brown and myself agreed that it was unfair that we should not be allowed to go into Eastbourne to see the bonfires and the Guy Fawkes celebrations, so we climbed over the school wall, and went into the town. Uninvited by us, my young brother came too.

We got back at 1 a.m. Mr. Esam awaited us. He received us gravely, said nothing by way of rebuke, and sent us off to bed. I had a half idea that Mr. Esam might not want the episode to be known, and would forgive us; but next morning we were publicly expelled, and I had a further painful interview with my father when I had boarded the train and reached home.

Next day he and I went into Brighton, and there was a meeting with Mr. Marshall, the Headmaster of Brighton Grammar School, to see if he would admit me to his school; and to this day I remember the keen, not unkindly, way in which Mr. Marshall looked at me as he listened to my father's account of the Eastbourne misadventure, and how

at the end of the narrative he said, " High spirits, I think. I am sure there is nothing bad in the boy."

It was at Brighton Grammar School, at the very outset, that there came a meeting which undoubtedly influenced my career. On my first day at dinner I sat next to a delicate-looking boy, thin, red-haired, and with a slight stoop. He was a particularly quick talker, used his hands to gesticulate, and altogether had an un-English air about him. I did right to note him well, for he was Aubrey Beardsley, the odd, fantastic, brilliant artist who, in the all too short time that he lived, earned a fame that spread through two hemispheres. When we talked, we found that both of us had a feeling for the stage. Even in those days Beardsley preferred Congreve and Wycherley to the ordinary books of boyhood. Before long Beardsley and I were allowed to share a private study. We were under a master, a Mr. A. W. King, who also was very fond of theatrical entertainment, and it was largely through him that almost every week some performance was given. Beardsley and I became quite prominent. We played *Ici on Parle Français*; Beardsley was the Frenchman and I took Toole's old part. We also did *The Spitalfields Weaver*, and I remember, too, reciting " Ostler Joe," and Beardsley gave a most impressive rendering of " Eugène Aram." There was one special occasion when the school gave a Christmas performance of the *Pied Piper* at the Dome, and the *Sussex Daily News* published a number of the paper which became ever memorable to me because, commenting on our play, it said that my work was " quite professional."

Beardsley did a good deal of drawing in those days, and they were schoolboy efforts, and as yet no indication showed itself of the strength and purity of line for which afterwards he became so renowned. He, however, showed a great talent for caricature. Neither of us did a great deal of work at Brighton Grammar School. Beardsley was naturally so clever, so quick in the uptake, that a little hard study at the end always seemed to get him through

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his exams. I struggled on, always a bit behind ; but the Headmaster seemed kindly disposed towards me.

Except for this growing interest in the theatre, my schooldays left little impress upon my mind. But they were not to last long. My father had monetary losses, and I had to begin earning my living at sixteen. I was sent to join a surveyor, who had offices next door to where the Hotel Metropole at Brighton now stands. As a matter of fact, some of the plans for this well-known hotel were drawn up at this office in which I worked. I can't say that surveying attracted me. My ambitions were now undoubtedly focused on the stage. I took up smoking-concert singing—in fact I sang my comic songs on every possible occasion. There was at that time at the Brighton Alhambra, then a music-hall, a stage-manager named T. S. Lonsdale, who wrote " Tommy Make Room for Your Uncle " and other popular music-hall songs. I sang some of his songs. There was also a pianist named Wilson, who was at the Gaiety Theatre in the Lewes Road, near the workhouse and the cemetery ; it is now a soda-water factory. Both these men became my companions. I used to be all ears when they talked about the stage. Wilson left Brighton to go to the Royal Clarence Music-Hall at Dover. Soon after he wrote me that if I wanted he could get me a week's engagement to sing my comic songs at Dover. I did not hesitate—it seemed to me that my chance had come. I said at the office that I was going to spend a week's holiday with friends at Dover, and off I went, my hopes high, to make my début as a professional performer.

I was a complete failure. In my inexperience I had not realised that there was a difference between singing to the accompaniment of a piano and to that of a band, and I had not sought a rehearsal—I was so sure that I knew my songs. But immediately I came on the stage, and began to sing, I understood that this was not like appearing at smoking concerts where your young friends came to hear you. The soldiers in the audience would not have me at

all. My turn finished with the first song, and the manager not only told me that I should not be wanted again, but refused to pay me. I hung about Dover till my week's holiday was up, then I returned to Brighton most miserable, but still convinced that some sort of success on the stage would before long come my way.

CHAPTER II

" Let's go to America "—My Journey, Steerage, with Scotson Clark—Tried as " Supers " at the Star Theatre, near Union Square—Again I fail the First Time—Scotson Clark's Top Hat and Black Cape—First Memories of Koster & Bial's—Miss Madge Lessing—Hoffman House and the Millionaires in Sombreros—" Dead Man's Curve "—I get engaged at a " Dime " Museum—" Tony Pastor's "—Scotson Clark and Miss Edna May in the Chorus—New York Theatrical Boarding-Houses—Again Out of Work—I meet Sydney Price—10 Cents between us—When the Sole of my Boot came off—I play Seven Parts in *Around the World in Eighty Days*—Stranded at St. Louis—A Famous Song " On the Bowery."

THE music-hall trial at Dover was in August 1890. In the following December I took what was to prove to be the most important step in my career. At the school at Brighton I had got to know a boy named Scotson Clark. He was a strange impressive youth. He had his own ideas about music and literature and life generally ; he was the son of the composer of the " Marche aux Flambeaux." He could also draw, and indeed ultimately became art editor of the *Century Magazine.* One day I said to Scotson Clark : " Let's go to America ; I will earn my living on the stage ; you will become a painter."

The next few weeks I saved every penny I could, pawned many of my belongings, and ultimately we left Newhaven for Dieppe, spent one night in Paris—we thought it might be our one and only chance of seeing Paris—and caught the boat for America at Boulogne. It was a Holland-American liner, the *Werkendam,* and we went steerage. The sleeping quarters were not comfortable ; they were appalling, or at least they were made so by the filthy habits of our fellow-travellers—largely Lithuanians and Poles. We only tried them once. The next night we lay

on deck near the smoke-stacks. That caused some of the sailors to be interested in us, and for the rest of the voyage they allowed us to occupy their bunks in the fo'castle when they were on duty on deck. An old sailor supplied us with the same food as the crew. We could not eat that served in the steerage. Just before landing we had a scare; we were told that no one was allowed to land in America who had not at least 100 dollars in his possession. Perhaps it was because we were pretty well dressed and looked decent English boys—at any rate, we had no trouble in getting ashore. And certainly neither of us had as much as £5.

Our purpose, of course, was to get some sort of theatrical engagement. We heard the name of an agent, a Mrs. Wade, who might help us. We engaged a room at three dollars a week, and then saw Mrs. Wade, who, I remember, sent us to a theatre which was called the Star Theatre. It was just below Union Square. The site is now occupied by business houses. A piece called *An American Citizen*, I think, in which a celebrated actor of those days, W. H. Crane, would appear, was about to be produced. Supers were wanted for a New York Yacht Club scene. We found ourselves on the stage at a rehearsal, and Crane told us with great eloquence that we were supposed to be members of the Club; that it was the day of an important race; and that as the curtain went up we were to be seen walking from the Clubhouse—we must all try and feel that we were really members of the Yacht Club. The curtain rose, and the whole crowd of us began trying to follow out these instructions. Suddenly, the producer, Joseph Brooke, who later brought over *Ben Hur* to Drury Lane, stopped the rehearsal. "I want," he called out, "ladies and gentlemen; ladies and gentlemen, not children. What's that child doing there?" With a confused feeling I realised that he was gazing at me. I was eighteen, but I looked much younger. I had full red cheeks and was very slim, and, as I say, I looked very young.

Thus for the second time my stage aspirations were

checked. I waited until the rehearsal was finished, and then went back with Scotson Clark to our lodgings. Scotson Clark fortunately looked older than I did ; he was kept on at a dollar a performance. He stuck to me, and for some weeks I shared what he earned. Scotson Clark had brought to America a top hat and a black Inverness cape, and he looked quite an impressive figure. He posed as my manager, said that I was a talented young singer of comic songs, and tried to get me engagements. But it was heart-breaking work. At the house where we lived was a man named Pfeiffer, who was an agent for George Goulet's champagne. He noticed me as I passed him on the stairs, and asked the landlady who I was. Some days he would take me on his rounds selling champagne. That meant that at every house at which we called he would order a bottle of his own brand of champagne. As I was getting very little food at that time—as a rule just a plate of porridge for breakfast—this experience did at least enable me to test what capacity I had for standing strong drink. One place we visited on these tours was Koster & Bial's—not the music-hall higher up town that we knew later. In those days Carmencita, whom Sargent painted, and Paulus, the French lion comique, appeared at this Hall. It was in West 23rd Street, a street now very much down town. Theatres were not allowed to serve drinks or to have smoking in the auditorium, but these privileges were allowed at beer gardens, where a performance was given upon a stage ; but there was no curtain in such places dividing the audience from the stage. A drop curtain constituted a theatre as distinct from a concert hall or beer garden in the sight of the law. Now, regular theatrical performances were given at Koster & Bial's, and to get round the curtain difficulty there was an ingenious arrangement like a fan, which came up from the stage and served all the purposes of a drop curtain which came down. All sorts of people appeared at the Koster & Bial's of these days. There was José Gregory, a well-known beauty of the time, and Jenny Joyce, a young woman with marvellous legs, who came to

the Alhambra, and Madge Lessing, who many years afterwards appeared as principal girl in Drury Lane pantomime. Madge Lessing, when I saw her at this time, was playing Faust in a burlesque of *Faust*. The comedian in this piece was Gus Bruno, who subsequently had something to do with the shaping of my stage career. Afterwards, of course, Koster & Bial's built a large Hall up town.

The time of which I am writing is only just over thirty years ago, but the New York of those days was much different from the New York of to-day. At least, so it seems to me on the almost yearly visits I pay to America. It had, so to speak, a more colonial atmosphere. There was a great deal of very pleasant home life. The regular New Yorkers seemed to be plain, charming, family folk. There was also a most agreeable and yet simple Bohemian life. One remembers the Hoffman House in Madison Square, with its fine bar, full of pictures, which Phil May called the National Gallery of America. You saw "Western" millionaires come to New York to spend money. Wonderful sombreros they wore, and occasionally tie-pins made from rough nuggets of gold set with one large diamond. All sorts of picturesque figures, indicative of a new and rapidly developing country, were to be seen. A great number of hostelries had their free-lunch counters where, just for buying a drink, you could have a stand-up meal; but at the Hoffman House you could have not merely sandwiches and biscuits, but solid cuts off the joint. The drinks were correspondingly more expensive. Outside the Hoffman House was "Dead Man's Curve," the dangerous crossing of New York. The newspapers used to feature the daily casualties, they became so notorious.

I come back to my own efforts to earn a living. As I have said, my friend Scotson Clark stuck to me, helping me indeed to exist, and all the time trying to secure me an engagement. At last my stroke of luck came. Opposite Tammany Hall was a place known as Huber's Museum—a dime museum where freaks were exhibited, such as the dog-faced boy, Jonathan Bass, the ossified man, the

skeleton dude, the fat lady, the tattooed man, the man who wrote with his toes, etc. It was a house with two or three floors, and on one floor a variety performance was given, for which 10 cents extra had to be paid, and there were eight performances a day. I was engaged to sing there for a week at 30 dollars a week, and made quite a success, singing the songs I had been accustomed to sing at the smoking-concerts in Brighton. But there happened to be another comedian engaged there named Charles Duncan, and at the end of my first week he said I was singing songs that he intended to sing. He was more or less established there, and I had to yield to his complaints and change my songs. I only lasted another three or four days. What with the stuffy atmosphere—and owing to the many performances there was no chance to get out for fresh air and exercise—my voice went; and again I was without an engagement.

Quite a number of interesting performances at one time or another appeared at Huber's; the one I remember best was the contortionist, Baggessen, "the Human Serpent," who had sprung up in opposition to Marinelli, the well-known agent recently deceased, who was also a contortionist. Baggessen became celebrated afterwards as the funny waiter who for years made London laugh, at the Empire and elsewhere, by smashing innumerable plates and being entangled with a fly paper. Recently he was doing the act at the Palace in Paris. Next door to Tammany Hall was Tony Pastor's, another place which occupies a landmark in the variety world of New York. Tony Pastor was a great character who had been a clown. He tried to sing songs of the Charles Godfrey type, and dressed in black cloak and opera hat; but he was a poor artist, and they used to tell the story of a man who came to the box office and asked: "Has Mr. Pastor been on yet?"—"Yes."—"Then I'll go in." Still, Pastor had an idea of what the public wanted, and among the English artists whom he introduced to America were Vesta Tilley, Bessie Bonehill, Tom Costello, Jenny Hill, and the Two

Macs; and, among American artists, Weber and Fields, and the Four Cohans. Mr. George Cohan (first husband of Miss Ethel Levey), actor, manager, playwright, and producer, perhaps the most representative man of the American stage of to-day, was a member of this troupe—the others being his father, mother, and sister Josephine, who married Fred Niblo, the film producer. She died in Australia.

Scotson Clark had, by this time, got another job in a comic opera company. At one time Miss Edna May was with him in the chorus in a piece written by Oscar Hammerstein—but that was later. Miss May was then Mrs. Titus—the wife of a professional cyclist. But his new engagement took him on tour and, for awhile, I was alone. After being at Huber's, I again sought the Mrs. Wade I mentioned earlier on. She happened to be sending a company to Long Branch, a seaside resort outside New York. They were going to play a repertoire including *Our Boys*, and she asked me if I had played in that well-known piece in England. I hadn't; but I said I had played Perkin Middlewick, the retired butterman, and on the strength of that statement I was engaged to play old-man parts. I did actually play Perkin Middlewick; but the production was entirely unsuccessful, no one came to see us, and we returned to New York. In the company I met an Englishman named Sydney Price, an indifferent actor, but a very striking-looking man. He stood six foot four; he had snow-white hair, although he was young looking; he wore an eyeglass without the cord, and played aristocrats. The Americans said he looked like Irving. Of course he looked nothing like Irving. Still, he was a man no one could help but look at.

When I came back to New York I went to live in a theatrical boarding-house. These boarding-houses were quite marvellous institutions. Any member of the theatrical profession, who was known to be conscientious and reliable, was allowed in the summer-time—which was the slack time for the profession—to stay there, run up a bill, and pay later when the engagements came along. And,

so far as I know, the people who kept these boarding-houses rarely got " stung."

I used to see Sydney Price every day—he also was out of work. There was a theatrical beer saloon called Engel's in 27th Street, where the theatrical papers were kept on files, and one day in the *New York Clipper* I saw an advertisement for an entire company for *Around the World in Eighty Days*, which was to be produced at Niblo's Garden, Lower Broadway, a district a long way from theatreland, near the Battery. I pointed out the advertisement to Price, and we discussed whether we should try and get engagements for this production.

We had 10 cents between us. It was a boiling hot day ; it was a long way to walk ; a ride would cost 5 cents each. Ten cents also represented two glasses of beer, and food at the free-lunch counter. Which should it be ?

We decided to walk, and I remember that on the way the sole of my right boot came off, and I had to stick it on somehow, and slither along for the rest of the long, tiring journey. Price got engaged at once, solely on his appearance ; but he argued long, and at last successfully for me. He told the producer, Bill Fleming, that I was a very clever young comedian.

Well, I played seven parts in that production of *Around the World in Eighty Days*. I was an Indian, a sailor, a policeman, a waiter in the Eccentric Club, London, in the first scene, and a gentleman in the Eccentric Club in the last scene. I had one disastrous moment at the first performance, when Phineas Fogg calls out, " I'll buy the ship." I was a sailor in that part of the play, and it was my business to dash forward and salute him. I was most anxious to come on looking different from what I did in my previous character of a waiter, and I thought it would be a good idea to put on short, black, chin whiskers, such as Dan Leno wore for his railway guard song. When I dashed forward made up like this, the audience burst into laughter, and to my dismay Fleming, who was playing the American who endeavoured to thwart Fogg, growled at me : " Get off the

stage." The experienced Fleming well understood that my absurdly comic appearance would kill all the dramatic effect he was putting into the scene. No wonder he acted with such promptitude.

It was 90 degrees in the shade on that opening night. Men in the audience began taking off their coats soon after the curtain went up, and before the last act a good many of them had removed even their collars, but we, the players, had to show dash, alacrity, and enthusiasm. Well, we did well enough, and the piece ran for four weeks. Then we went on the road. We drew money for a time, but then, what so frequently happened to touring companies happened to us—we got stranded. The company broke up, and those who had been able to save enough money returned to New York. One member of the company, by the way, was Arnold Kiralfy, a brother of Imre and Bolossy. He was a dancer—a bow-legged dancer. The members of our party who were left stayed at Cincinnati as long as was possible. Before we were actually stranded, various members of the company who could get better engagements left us. I remember that it meant that I played still more parts. One *matinée* at St. Louis I had to go on at very short notice as an Indian chief—a rather dramatic part that was. Charles Warren (for twenty years the American music publisher, Witmark's representative in London) was at St. Louis playing with his wife, Marguerite Fish—they were long known on the English Halls as Fish and Warren—and he came behind to compliment me on my diction. He reminded me of this not long ago when we were fellow-passengers with George M. Cohan on an Atlantic trip. Cohan was also playing in St. Louis at the same time. In the New York scene a troupe of eight girls sang a song, " On the Bowery," which had been a most successful number in *A Trip to Chinatown*. R. G. Knowles sang his song, " At Brighton," to the music of this tune.

When we got finally and completely stranded at St. Louis I ran into Gus Bruno, whom, as I mentioned, I first

met at Koster & Bial's in New York, and I told him all the circumstances; and, having seen our show, he engaged me and the eight girls who sang the Bowery song for his vaudeville piece, *A Strange Family*. So we got away from St. Louis and travelled on to Cincinnati. We stayed there a week rehearsing, and I thought things were beginning to look bright and hopeful, but there came further disaster. The backer of the show had become more and more annoyed because the part of the young woman in whom he was interested was getting gradually reduced, so that she had hardly a line to say; and at last he said, "I don't intend to go on any more. I'm through. I'll pay all your fares back to where you came from, or to Chicago, but nothing more." I decided to go to Chicago, and the eight Bowery Girls went with me.

CHAPTER III

I arrive in Chicago with 25 Cents in my Pocket—" We cannot let you in without Baggage "—A Night in a 15-cents Lodging-House—I look for a Man I had met in England—Hope, Elation, and then Bitter Disappointment—Rescued by the " Eight Bowery Girls "—I am engaged for *Chris and Lena*—" Wild-Catting " it in the Lumber Regions—The Leading Lady and my Father's Watch—In Chicago again—I meet Florenz Ziegfield, Jun.

YOUTH can be thankful for one thing—it cannot realise to the full the difficulties it may have to face; it has not learned to despair of hope. Probably it was the natural buoyancy of youth that kept me from troubling too much of what might result from the situation in which I now found myself.

When I got on the train for Chicago I had 25 cents in my pocket. My only possession of value was a watch my father had given me; my luggage was just a bundle of laundry. What trunks I had had since leaving New York had been seized at the hotels where we could not pay. We were on the train all day long, and I ate nothing, thinking to save my 25 cents to the very last.

It was late and snowing when we arrived at Chicago—a thin snow that dissolved as it settled on one, but clung to the clothes and made them damp. The station at which we arrived was on the south side, where there were many bridges, and a biting wind came in from the river. Everything looked cheerless and forbidding. I said good-bye to the eight girls, and tried to put on a jaunty air. I gathered that they were all right, and I myself had heard of a theatrical boarding-house where I might get admitted. But as I left the railway station I felt in no sort of jesting mood. I was frightfully hungry, and it did, indeed, seem

THEATRE ROYAL
AND OPERA HOUSE,
Proprietress and Manager] BRIGHTON. [Mrs H. NYE CHART.

TRIUMPHANT SUCCESS OF THE PANTOMIME!

ON MONDAY, DEC. 29th, 1879,
AND EVERY EVENING UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE,

At SEVEN o'clock, will be produced a Grand, Operatic, Fairy, Spectacular PANTOMIME, entitled

SINDBAD THE SAILOR

OR, HARLEQUIN OLD MAN OF THE SEA, AND THE FAIRIES OF THE ENCHANTED ISLE.
Written by FRANK W. GREEN and J. F. McARDLE, Esqrs.

SPECIAL ILLUMINATED

MORNING PERFORMANCES
WILL TAKE PLACE ON
SATURDAY, January 3rd, 1880,
AND ON MONDAY, WEDNESDAY, & SATURDAY, JAN. 5, 7, & 10.
Doors open at ONE o'clock. The Pantomime to commence at Half-past.

The New and Magnificent Scenery in the Opening designed by Mr I. S. LEMON, and Painted by him, T. PILBEAM, and EDWIN DAY. The Handsome Spangle and Jewelled Ornaments by Messrs. B. WHITE. The Ballet and Groupings arranged by Mdlle MAZONI. Machinery and Mechanical Effects by Mr MICHAEL FARRELL. Masks and Properties by Mr J. BENNETT. The Gas and Lime Light Effects by Mr F. HAWKER. The Magnificent Costumes by Messrs. and Madames ALIAS, Mrs S. MAY, Miss DAVIS, Messrs. HANNINGTON & SONS, B. WILLARD, and Mrs PILBEAM. The Comic Scenes by Mr. PERCIVANI. Perruquier, Mr H. DRURY.
The Jewel, Harmonica, and Statue Ballets; also the Market Chorus, Swinging Song, Incidental, and Transformation Music, composed and arranged by Mr FERDINAND KESSLER. The various Songs by permission of Messrs. FRANCIS & DAY, SHEARD, and HOPWOOD & CREW.
The Entire Stage Arrangements by Mr ALFRED BANGER.

The whole produced under the personal superintendence of Mrs H. NYE CHART.

IMMORTALS.

Fancy (the Fairy Queen of Romance) ..... Miss KATIE LEE
Phosphor (her attendant, an Electric Spark) ..... Miss KATE BERTRAM

INFERNALS.

Tornado (the Storm King, a blustering roller) ..... Mr WATTS
The Old Man of the Sea (a *hugly* customer) ..... TINY TIM
The Roc (a Bird who makes Sindbad its *burden*) ..... Mr PERSIVANI
The Young Roc (changing to the Chameleon—its offspring, of a *flighty* disposition) ..... Mr PERSIVANI

MORTALS.

Shipwreckeroe (an unscrupulous shipowner, possessed of a large sinking fund, a sworn foe to Sindbad) ..... Mr J. L. SHINE
Captain O'Scuttle (his mis-creant myrmidon, and Skipper of the bad ship "Tubberina") ..... Mr JOHN WAINWRIGHT
Sharkey (Mate of the "Tubberina") ..... Mr WILL REDDELL
Sindbad the Sailor....(a youth, who wishing for optical demonstration, goes to *sea*, a *tar* who is *pitched* into) ..... Miss MAUDE STAFFORD
Tinbad ..... (the Tailor; his friend, a snip of the old block, whose soul being above his shears, from *sheer* necessity, *sheers* off, "such a dog") ..... Mr ARTHUR ROBERTS

Sindbad's Companions *der* Voyage:
Whinbad, the Whaler ..... Miss F. YARD
Jinbad, the Jailer ..... Miss DOLLY TESTER
Hinbad, the Hailer ..... Miss GEORGIE CARRE
Rinbad, the Railer ..... Miss BLANCHE CHARLTON
Lindbad, the Lailer ..... Miss HASTINGS
Hindbad, the Hailer ..... Miss SLIGHT

Zorilda (Sindbad's Sister, in love with Tinbad, and who disguises as a tar, in order that none may *assailer*) ..... Miss KATE NEWTON
Scurthanapplus (King of Serendib, a King with only half-a-crown to bless himself with) ..... Mr THOS. F. PITT
Queen Quipsanktanky (his Queen, and very much better-half, a rara avis in *terra*) ..... Mr F. TERRIS
Princess Pretty Pearl (their Daughter, "the fairest of the fair," much run after and no wonder) ..... Miss ANNIE POOLE
Yasora (her pert Handmaiden, an *aggra*-waiting Maid) ..... Miss K. GURNEY
Fripperilop (a hard and fast-*idious*—no, rather good-looking Courtier) ..... Miss LIZZIE SANGER
Plamperino (the Original Prize Boy) ..... Mr H. HENRION
Drum Major ..... Master DRURY
Pages ..... Master MURRELL and Master ELLISTON
Decklodo, Brokenrigger, Lodeline, Skipper, Rawker, Marines, &c., Messrs. T. ATTREE, G. ATTREE, WELLER, MAJOR, SAYERS, JENNER, CHAPMAN, FUNNELL, WILSON, GORBY, PELHAM, SOUTH, MURRALL, ELLISTON, &c., &c.
Nameless Nymphs, Court Ladies, Brave Knights, Royal Guards, Bold Warriors, &c., &c.

Scene 1.—The Port of Bagdad, with Quay & Landing Place.

The Bad Ship "Tubberina" about to depart for Shewham—The Shipwrecker and the Scuttling Captain—The dastardly attack—Tinbad to the rescue—The Tailor's rival not respected—The Shipwrecker's scheme of revenge—The bad spirit in the cask—The appeal of ballet, and the final signal—Departure of the unseaworthy Ship, through a cannelle from &c.

(I. S. Lemon and T. Pilbeam

PLAYBILL OF THE FIRST PANTOMIME SEEN BY THE AUTHOR

It contains the name of his favourite comedian, ARTHUR ROBERTS. Among the small part players is DOLLY TESTER, who became Marchioness of Aylesbury.

that I had now reached the very end of my resources. At the theatrical boarding-house, the only answer I received when I inquired for a bed was: "We can't let you in without baggage."

I trudged along the streets—near the railway station they were neither well lighted nor lively—until I noticed a sign which read: "Beds 15, 25, and 35 cents." Across the street was a coffee-shop, where staring letters told me that I could buy coffee and a big sandwich for 10 cents. I went in, and had my first meal of the day. The cheap restaurants of America have for years been one of the show features of the country. They are the cleanest, and give the best value of any cheap restaurants in the world. There are spotless marble tables; the attendants wear spick-and-span white jackets and dresses; and there is an extraordinary variety of dishes, such as ham and eggs, hot biscuits, and griddle cakes. Rich as well as poor use these cheap restaurants for quick meals in New York and Chicago. On a recent visit to New York I met a duchess in Child's at Columbus Circle. I felt more confidence in myself after breaking my fast, and I thought I would look at the 15 cents' bed in the lodging-house.

I found my way into a gloomy public room, in the centre of which was a round stove with a pipe that went up to the ceiling. There were wooden forms grouped round the stove, and five or six silent men were sitting on them. No one took notice of me. I sat down on one of the forms, and after a while the warmth of the stove, and the fatigue of the journey had their effect. I fell asleep. But a strong arm shook me by the shoulder, and a gruff voice told me I couldn't sleep there; I should have to take a bed. So I paid away my last 15 cents, and went to bed—not a comfortable bed; but I was too tired to worry about that.

In the morning my penniless position came home to me. But youth is resilient. Somewhere from the back of my mind a thought, an idea, was borne in upon me. When I was a small boy, at Lindfield in Sussex, an American

gentleman, a Mr. Booth, came to the village, during fair week. I remembered hearing it said that he came from Chicago, and was well off. What if I could find him and tell him about my present plight. I went out, and found a drug store where I could look at the directory—in America you always look up the directory in chemist shops ; it is attached to a reading-desk by a chain. Among the Booths I found a packing firm of that name. That might be the one. Nothing like trying. It was my only chance. Away I went and found the offices of this firm, asked if Mr. Booth was in, and sent him my card, pencilling upon it, " From Lindfield, Sussex, England."

I was shown into a large, well-equipped office, and recognised sitting at the desk the Mr. Booth I had seen in England. It was a moment of hope, even of elation. When I asked if he remembered paying a visit to England, he said, " Yes, I was over in England at that time." Then he asked courteously, " What are you doing in Chicago ? " As I told him my story, my struggling efforts on the stage, my travels, and the ups and downs of my life, I could see that gradually his face was hardening. " What is it that you want from me ? " he asked at last. I asked if he could give me a job of any kind in this great business of his. " I cannot see," he replied, " that, so far, your career in this country has fitted you for commercial pursuits."

I pleaded with him, talked about a porter's or a messenger's job ; and then I told him that I hadn't a cent in the world. His face did not lose its look of half indifference, half annoyance. He ended the interview by saying in decisive tones, " I'm afraid I can do nothing for you, but if 5 dollars are of any use, here they are."

Naturally I thanked him, and truly I felt grateful, for the money came as a godsend. But I could see that he was not interested in me, and did not want to see more of me. I went off feeling that I hadn't done so badly after all, for I was now 5 dollars ahead of the game.

Five minutes afterwards, in Madison Street, I met two

of the eight Bowery Girls. " We were thinking of you, and how you were fixed," they said. " Did you find a good room anywhere ? " I told them what had happened to me, and they said they had discovered a " lovely place, three rooms and a kitchen " for 5 dollars a week. They had paid a week's rent, and had a little money, but it would not go far. If I cared, I could go there and sleep on a couch in the kitchen. The house proved to be a superior tenement in Halsey Street, one of the cheaper parts of the town. I contributed 2 dollars towards my share of the provisions. There was a bath with a geyser ; I had a bath, and that refreshed me ; and then we went out to see if there was work to be got.

I found out a well-known character named Sam T. Jack, who ran burlesque shows—" Sam T. Jack's Colossal Gaiety Company " was one of them, and in Chicago itself he had a permanent burlesque theatre which he called " Sam T. Jack's Own Theatre." I let him know what I and the " Bowery Girls " could do, and he told me to see a man named Engel, who ran a beer garden on the north side of Chicago—it was only done away with about a year or so ago, I believe. Engel might give the girls a trial show, and he would come and see them.

Well, the girls had their trial show, and Sam T. Jack at once engaged them, and off they went on tour. But there was nothing for me ; I was left alone, with one week of the rooms in Halsey Street paid for.

But, as on so many previous occasions, something turned up at the last moment. There was a man named John Hazelrigg, who played Sydney Price's part of Phineas Fogg in *Around the World in Eighty Days* when we were on tour. I had kept in touch with him, and, two days before the week was up, there arrived a telegram, telling me that Hazelrigg had arranged for a part for me ; that I was to go to Dayton, Ohio ; and that my railway money was being wired to me. I got to Dayton before the company arrived, and found that the piece for which I was engaged was one called *Chris and Lena.*

This engagement began for me a pleasant and prosperous few weeks with a regular salary. The star and manager was a man named Pete Baker—a German jodeller. He had played in London at the Duke's Theatre, Holborn; the last attraction there, I believe, before it was burned down. He wore an enormous diamond, which at that time by custom and tradition was looked upon as a regular part of the outfit of the manager of a respectable touring company. If he wore a large diamond, it was taken to mean that the people he engaged would be sure of their salaries. Some managers, indeed, were in the habit of hiring a diamond in order to inspire the necessary confidence.

The last time I was in America I had a letter from Pete Baker, now a man of eighty; he is ending his days as a watchman at Buffalo. He wrote to me that, if I was the Charles B. Cochran he knew in 1891, he would take a day off to come and spend it with me. It was just when I was leaving, and we did not meet; but the old man wrote to me again, and said that he was as good a performer as ever, and that he would not have given up the stage, "Only there is such a demand for new faces."

We had quite a pleasant tour of the small towns, with *Chris and Lena*, and when Hazelrigg left to take up a part in New York I persuaded Pete Baker to take Sydney Price into the company, so that I was at last able to repay Price for the good turns he had done me. When the tour, as arranged, was about to end, Baker's son-in-law said that if we would accept smaller salaries he would take the company to the north-west—to Michigan and Wisconsin and the Lake Districts. We agreed to do so, and had a few weeks in the lumber regions, one of the most picturesque parts of America; among the Swedes in their brightly coloured blanket suits, and their spiked boots for keeping a secure foothold as they ran along the logs which were swept along the rivers. The common phrase for a haphazard tour of this sort was that you were going to "wild-cat" it. The advance manager set out ten days ahead, and booked performances wherever he could.

I remember one typical town. We arrived at the station, and found no town at all ; but a bus took us along till we came to just one street of wooden houses. The whole place was full up of men up from the lumber camps. It was pay day. There was no actual theatre, only a large wooden building of two stories. The ground floor saloon —a large bar—was filled with men of all nationalities who kept a whole series of automatic music-boxes going. The stage was upstairs, and we all went upstairs and prepared for the play. But we waited and waited, and there was no sign of any audience. Down below, the automatic machines were going like mad. It was obvious that the crowd of men below were ready to spend their money ; but why would they not come and see our play ? At last we learned why. Said the manager of the hall, when Baker expressed surprise that the hall was empty : " Why, you don't expect a crowd till you start the music, do you ? "

One of our company rushed to the piano and began to play lively tunes. Immediately there was a rush of men from below. They poured up—scrambled to the first seats they could find. We took 900 dollars, and our play went like wildfire.

We, of course, were living practically from hand to mouth, and at Eau Clair, Wisconsin, the " tour " busted. Baker's son-in-law told me he had sold everything to raise our fares back to Chicago. But he would not let me tell Marie Stuart, our leading lady, that we were about to take flight. I fancy she had shown great keenness in drawing her full money, and would not play unless she got it. At any rate, Baker's son-in-law, Harlan, said that we were all to be at the railway depôt at five o'clock in the morning, and that Marie Stuart was not to know. Somehow this seemed to me unfair, and I resolved that, whatever happened, I would warn Marie Stuart that we were leaving. The only way I could communicate with her was by message—she was living in a different hotel from the rest of the company. So I wrote a note, telling her what was to happen. There was a difficulty. I had no money to give to the

night-porter whom I made promise to take the note, so I took out my father's watch, which I gave to the man, and in my note requested Marie Stuart to give him a dollar when she received my message, and get back the watch. Next morning we were all at the station except Marie Stuart.

Three days later I saw her in Chicago. She had followed us. She told me that the night-porter had brought her no note, so she did not find out until after breakfast-time that the company had gone without her. I did not recover my watch.

In Chicago I again met Sydney Price, and he knew Chicago well. I also for the first time met Florenz Ziegfield, jun., now the head of the famous Ziegfield Follies. He had just converted an armoury in Chicago into a music-hall, which he called The Trocadero, and he was running Sandow, who had come over for the World's Fair. Ziegfield's father was the head of a school of music in Chicago, and Florenz is known even now as Florenz Ziegfield, jun. I mention Florenz Ziegfield, jun., at this point because he engaged Marie Stuart when she reached Chicago from Eau Clair, and she made a big hit with a song called the "Midway Plaisance," which was about this famous street of sideshows in the World's Fair. Afterwards Marie Stuart went to New York, and became one of the best-known artists of the vaudeville or music-hall stage.

CHAPTER IV

Really Down and Out—The Last Dollar that became 875 Dollars—An Extraordinary Experience at Roulette—Off to see "The World's Fair"—Sydney Price loses all our Money—I sell Fountain-Pens at "The World's Fair"—I try to join Barnum & Bailey's Show, but am turned down by Imre Kiralfy—I join a "Medicine Show" and sell Ointment—On Tour with *A Breezy Time*—A Ludicrous Experience on a Swing—The only Theatrical Magistrate at Urbana, Ohio—A 1916 Sequel at the St. Martin's Theatre.

AND so I was in Chicago once more, this time really down and out. Chicago was now in the midst of the excitement of the World's Fair. It was, I suppose, quite the wildest place on earth. Crooks had gathered from all over the world.

Had it not been for Price I should have been starving and homeless. He had just a little money left from his last engagement. We lived in a room on the south side, and spent a lot of time looking for jobs, occasionally letting go some of Price's money in "rushing the growler." I must explain what "rushing the growler" meant. In Chicago, at that time, the bar-tenders for 10 cents would fill with lager beer any receptacle that was brought to them. They would even fill big water-jugs for that sum.

One day Price, as we woke, told me that he had come to his last dollar. I shall never forget that day! It has caused me ever since to turn a believing ear to stories of great good luck.

In the afternoon we were walking along one of the main streets. Price had just repeated that he had one dollar left when, without warning, he turned into a side alley and, walking fast, came to a house which I could not

distinguish from any of the others, and hurried upstairs. I followed, wondering, and with no chance to ask questions. Price opened a door at the top of the stairs, and being now close behind him I saw that we were in a crowded room, where a number of men were playing faro and roulette. There was hardly time to take in the scene before I noticed that Price was at the roulette table, and had whipped his dollar on number seven.

This is a perfectly true story, and I am telling you that when the wheel stopped, seven was the number that turned up. That meant that Price had won 35 dollars—more money than I had seen for weeks. I felt inclined to shout, and to try and persuade Price to come away there and then, but something held me. I stood tongue-tied. Price, with his six-foot-four of height, his snow-white hair, his well-chiselled features, and his monocle was, as I have said, a very impressive-looking person. One or two of the men sitting round the table looked at him curiously, probably as much because of his fine looks as because he had had the unusual luck to stake on the winning number first shot.

Price, with great calmness, took up 10 dollars, and left 25 dollars on the same number, seven. Again I repeat that I am narrating a true story. Once more number seven turned up. The 25 dollars became 875 dollars.

This time we did walk out. We did not even wait for the congratulations of the other players. It was like a play. In two minutes we had passed from a state of destitution to one, for us, of wealth. I remember we went off to a well-known restaurant, Rector's, and drank four or five cocktails each. We followed this with a tremendous meal, of which porterhouse-steak formed the chief dish ; and be it remembered that neither of us had had proper food for several days. Then we lit up big cigars and went to pay our first visit to the World's Fair.

Even to-day I regard the spectacle of the grounds of the World's Fair as the most impressive thing of its kind

that I have seen. The fairy-like splendour of the buildings; the blazing beauty and the inventive variety of the illuminations! The immensity of it all!

We spent about 100 dollars that night, and went home discussing what should be our next step for securing permanent work. Next morning, when I awoke, I found that Price had already gone out. I could not find him in any of our usual haunts. In the afternoon, when I got back, he was lying on the bed, a pitcher of beer by his side. He looked shamefaced, and well he might. He had gone back to the house where roulette was played—and had lost everything.

Our situation now really was desperate. We tried to get jobs as shop assistants, porters, " barkers " outside the shops and cheap restaurants; and all the time Price kept saying, " *You* ought to be able to get a job at anything. My appearance is against me, I am too conspicuous—you are commonplace—ordinary." Well, it was I who got the job—selling fountain-pens at a stall in the World's Fair. I didn't do badly either. In one month I earned and saved enough to take us both back to New York. It was now summer, when things theatrical are slack in New York; but the Barnum & Bailey show was starting on its summer tour, and an engagement with the famous circus meant a settled engagement, with the money sure—15 dollars a week and " cakes." The word " cakes " requires some explanation. It meant that you got your meals at the circus cook-tent, where they cost nothing and were plentiful. They were engaging a singing chorus, so I had to undergo a voice trial. I sang a scale, and then heard Lombardi, the musical director, say, " You are all right, second tenors over there." Others followed me, and many of them were rejected; after which there was an order that the applicants picked out should return at two o'clock, when Mr. Imre Kiralfy himself would be present. Mr. Kiralfy was staging the big spectacle, which was an important part of the show. I felt very interested at the prospect of seeing Mr. Kiralfy, but I did not anticipate what he was going to say to me.

When I sang for him he looked angrily at me, and called out, " How did you get here ? Why do you waste my time, Lombardi ? " So I did not succeed in my efforts to join the Barnum & Bailey show. Years afterwards, when Kiralfy and myself were introduced at Olympia, and he asked, " Have we ever met before, Cochran ? " I told him of this incident.

Well, it remained absolutely necessary for me to do something. By this time, by studying the theatrical papers, I learned that some people called Fitz and Webster were engaging a company for a musical piece called *A Breezy Time*, that was about to go on tour. The gossip among the theatrical rank and file was that they were good people to be with—the money was sure. One condition, though, was that every performer had to play some sort of musical instrument. Fitz was a fat, good-natured sort of man, who wore an enormous diamond pin, the sign of tradition that he did not fail to pay the salaries. His wife was not so agreeable ; before they married she had been a schoolmistress, who played the church organ in some American town. Fitz engaged me because I told him I was an English pantomimist, and could do funny falls.

A Breezy Time was not going on the road immediately, and I had to earn money to keep myself before we started the tour. This period of waiting provided me with even further experiences. Through a *Clipper* advertisement I got engaged at Jersey City by a " Dr. " Greenberg, who ran a " Medicine Show." We travelled with a booth ; the performers paraded outside, as they did at the fairs in England ; then a drama was played, in which " Dr. " Greenberg appeared as the hero ; and at the end of the play, before the audience dispersed, the " Doctor " made a flamboyant speech recommending an ointment they had for sale, and while he was eulogising the ointment the members of his company had to go among the audience and sell it. I had four weeks with " Dr. " Greenberg, earned 25 dollars a week for my acting, and a percentage

AUBREY BEARDSLEY

on the amount of ointment that I sold. While rehearsing *A Breezy Time* I was lucky enough to get two weeks' engagement, one at the Star Theatre, New York, and one in Brooklyn, with the great actor, Joe Jefferson, in *Rip Van Winkle.* I did utility business, playing a gnome and a villager. Jefferson was a very old man, but his performance was even then remarkable. The nearest thing I have seen to compare with it was that of the late Frank Bacon in the play *Lightning*, which ran for thousands of nights in New York and then in Chicago, where poor Bacon died " in harness," through constantly playing the arduous part without a holiday. Bacon was a poor actor until he got his play produced. It made him a fortune, but cost him his life. I was quite prosperous when I started off with *A Breezy Time.*

I have said that every one in the company had to play a musical instrument. I was no musician, but I held my own, making music with bells on tennis rackets. There was one Turkish scene where members of the company had bells on their arms, legs, ears, everything. My big scene came at the end of the first act, where as Smart, the detective, I had to submit to a rigorous chase. At one point I had to jump into a trunk, just as an Irishwoman and a German comic dashed on to seize me. The trunk was a trick one, with india-rubber fittings, and the big laugh came with the Irishwoman sitting on the trunk with my head just sticking out, and the lid apparently pressing on my neck. Of course my neck was quite safe, because of the india-rubber arrangement. In the last act I was chased through the doors and up the chimney of a trick house. I had had no rehearsal with the actual house, and there was a bit of a catastrophe at the first performance. I was supposed to dash, after jumping from the roof, towards a garden swing, and, by clutching the ropes, haul myself up to a bar, from where I poked fun at my pursuers as the curtain went down. But, having had no rehearsal, I did not realise how difficult it was going to be for me to get a good foothold on the seat of the swing in the high heels

and the built-up soles which I wore to make me look taller—all to fit in with the character I was representing. I tried and tried again to swing myself up to the bar, with my pursuers having to invent pantomime, so as to make the audience believe that I could not be caught. At last I struck on the only solution. I let myself slip down from the swing, hurried off, and brought in some steps—and mounted the bar in that way. However, on the whole I got on fairly well. I was forty weeks in that company. I had one mishap, about a couple of months before the show finished—I slipped off the bar and fell on the stage, hurting myself rather severely. That was at Kansas City.

In one town, Johnstown, Pennsylvania, where the great flood was, a local paper gave me the only notice of my work as actor I have ever kept. It said, " Charles B. Cochran played the part of Smart, the detective. He certainly must have learned the art of acting in a stable with hungry horses ; he did nothing but attempt to chew the paint from the scenery. A more ridiculous chump has never been seen on the local stage."

I will now admit that that notice damped my ardour, and had a great deal to do with my ultimate decision to give up acting. Still, I kept my engagement the whole season, and only two others in the company did that.

I must tell one story of that trip, because I was reminded of it by a letter that came to me from America when I opened the St. Martin's Theatre.

We reached a little town called Urbana, in Ohio, one of the towns where we played one night, and then moved on. Urbana was one of the American places where they had local option, which meant that it was " dry " ; but there were several illicit stills, and a great deal of liquor of exceedingly bad quality. We played on a Saturday night, and on Sunday morning one of the local celebrities, who had come round to tell us that he would see that we got a " drop of the right stuff," took me to an underground

still, and a few of us sat in this cellar drinking for an hour or more. When I came up into the hot sun of a very fine day I admit that I was not myself. The bells were ringing for church-going, and through the town square, among other church-goers, came a coloured woman dressed in the flamboyant fashion so dear to the coloured race of America.

I make no excuses; as I have said, I was not myself. I am told that I went up to the coloured lady, singing "My gal's a high-born lady"; that I tried to get her to cake-walk; that her cape came off in my hand; and that a coloured policeman walked me to a cell. What I certainly do remember is that I spent the night on an old oak bench, and felt frightfully ill in the morning.

Next day I was brought into the local court, before the magistrate. Among the people in court was the manager of our company; but he looked very severe, and turned his head away when I stared appealingly in his direction.

The charge was a startling one. I was accused of highway robbery, disturbing the Sabbath, being drunk and disorderly, and of assaulting a lady. The magistrate looked more and more solemn as a coloured policeman gave his evidence. "It is a very serious case indeed," he said. "It is a dreadful thing that one of our citizenesses cannot walk to a place of worship without being molested by vagabonds like you, who come to disgrace our honoured town. It is a very serious case," he went on; "on these different counts, I could send you to prison for seven years. What have you to say, prisoner?"

I felt that supreme tact was necessary. I said I was very sorry, and that I knew I had been drunk, but recollected nothing about what else I had done.

"I do not see why the State should be burdened with worthless people like you," observed the magistrate. "I think, though, that a fine of a thousand dollars will about meet the case. Can you pay a thousand dollars?"

I intimated that I could not.

" What can you pay ? "

I answered that I was afraid I could pay nothing. I know that I had a few dollars the night before, 7 dollars and 35 cents, to be exact, but that was all.

" We took these," the coloured policeman informed the court, with promptitude.

" Is there any one here who will pay for you ? " inquired the magistrate.

I pointed out that my manager was in court ; and the manager got up and said solemnly, " He is certainly not worthy my paying a thousand dollars. I'd leave him here," he went on, in matter-of-fact tones, " but unfortunately we have to give a performance to-night, and there is no one to replace him."

The coloured magistrate stroked his chin and looked reflectively at the manager. " What would you give ? " he asked at last.

" Twenty-five dollars," said the manager, without hesitation. And 25 dollars it was that he paid to secure my release.

As the court was clearing, I thought of my penniless situation. " Do I get back my 7 dollars and 35 cents, your Worship ? " I asked, with a certain amount of assurance.

" What does he say ? " asked the magistrate.

My demand was repeated to him.

" Certainly not ! " was his emphatic reply. " Don't you think," he said glaring at me, " that the court wants a drink too ? "

As I left the court, a Mr. Will M'Gowan, the local correspondent of the *New York Dramatic News*, came up and spoke to me. He talked smilingly of my troubles, and proved a very good fellow indeed. He took me to his place, gave me coffee and eggs, and lent me 5 dollars for my hotel bill. It was Mr. M'Gowan who, when I opened the St. Martin's Theatre in December 1916, wrote reminding me of our meeting in Urbana, Ohio. He added that the

old oak bench, on which I had slept, was still in the same place.

For a few days, when our tour was resumed, I was put into Coventry by the manager of the company and his wife.

CHAPTER V

Having saved a Bit of Money I aim to get into a Better Class of Theatrical Company—Kirk's in the Broadway—I meet Maurice Barrymore and Tyrone Power—I seek an Interview with Richard Mansfield—Beginners' Luck—Mr. Mansfield ill—Again on my Beam Ends—I become Assistant to the Church of England Chaplain to the Port of New York—In Mansfield's Company at last—Mr. Mansfield's Comment on my Make-Up.

I SAVED a bit of money on this last tour, and when I got back to New York I was determined to make a bid to get into a better class of company. There was at that time, at the corner of Broadway and 27th Street, a place called Kirk's, really a high-class grocer's shop, with a bar at the back where you could get good Scotch whisky —a very rare thing in America in those days ; and Kirk's was the great resort of English actors who had settled in New York. I met there Maurice Barrymore, the father of John, Lionel, and Ethel Barrymore, now three of the most distinguished players in the United States ; Ted Henley, the brother of W. E. Henley, the poet ; John Glendinning, another very well-known name in America, and other actors of distinction. I used to visit Kirk's in the hope of obtaining an engagement through these people.

I lived in a boarding-house where another boarder was Tyrone Power, a grandson of the famous Irish comedian who was drowned at sea. When last I was in New York, Tyrone Power was playing the king in *Hamlet* to John Barrymore's *Hamlet.* Through Power I met an old fellow named Mervyn Dallas.

Dallas was a man at whom the others used to laugh. He dressed in the style of a country gentleman, wide checks, a sort of gamekeeper's coat with big pockets, and

there was no subject on which he would not offer an opinion.

He was in the habit of saying that he had been a surgeon in the Crimean War. It was generally assumed that he made this claim because Charles Wyndham was known to have been an army surgeon—although his claim may have been true. I remember once hearing Dallas recount his experiences. " When I was in the Crimea," he began.

" How old are you now, Dallas ? " interrupted one of the company.

" Forty-five," returned Dallas calmly.

" Then all I can say is, you must be a blinking anachronism," came the reply, and Dallas got no further with his life-story that day.

Dallas had bought the playing rights of *The House on the Marsh*, which every year he took on tour. It also happened that he had once played the Keeper of the Tower in *Richard III.*, with Richard Mansfield, and one day, becoming communicative, he ended by saying to me : " You ought to call on my friend Dick Mansfield, and see if he can give you anything to do. Say I sent you, my boy. Say I sent you." And indeed it did come about that one day I made my resolve, went to the box office of the Garrick Theatre, which was Mr. Mansfield's theatre, and demanded if I could see him. The box-office keeper, without troubling to look up, merely replied " No." " Do you know when he will be here ? " I asked. " No ! " was again the answer. " You have no idea at all when he will be in ? " Still the answer " No."

But luck was on my side—beginner's luck. I heard a voice coming from the room behind the box office—a strong compelling voice—and its owner inquired : " Who is that asking for me ? Why did you say I wasn't here ? "

The box-office man looked confused, and apologised to some one in the room behind him. Then he came out and asked me would I follow him. I was taken into the room, and saw a man sitting there whom I at once recognised as the celebrated Mr. Richard Mansfield.

Mansfield occupied a position on the American stage comparable only to that of Irving in England. He had the reputation of being a man who alarmed people, of being difficult to get on with. All that flashed through my mind as I was shown into the room, and I do not say that I felt fully at my ease. Mr. Mansfield looked closely at me, very closely as I began my opening rather apologetic sentences. But his expression seemed quite amiable. All at once he cut short what I was saying by demanding: "You are an actor, are you? What have you done?" I told him all I could tell, hurrying the words as quickly as I could. But what put heart into me was that he listened; he even drew me out. He laughed when I told him of my experience in the "Medicine Show." "That's right," he said. "It's the only way to get experience. I did all that. I even played Dame in pantomime."

He ended by getting up and saying, "Well, young man, I'll give you an engagement. Come to me when my season opens." I listened to this definite promise with a feeling of thankfulness and joy, that is even now unforgettable. When Mr. Mansfield called in his stage manager, Tommy Graham, and told him that I was engaged for next season, I knew that my fortune really had taken a turn. As I was bidding Mr. Mansfield farewell, I remembered to say, "Oh, I ought to mention that it was Mr. Mervyn Dallas who sent me to see you."

"Did he?" said Mansfield. "Well, I will overlook it on condition that you promise not to send Mervyn Dallas to see me."

I was, of course, the envy of all my circle when I reappeared at Kirk's. To be engaged by the great Mansfield was indeed something. I was as happy as a king for some weeks, living on the money I had saved from my trip with *A Breezy Time.*

But even now tremors were reserved for me. Shortly before the Mansfield season was due to begin I read in the newspapers that Mr. Mansfield had fallen seriously ill. The reports got steadily worse. It was said that he had

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lost his memory; that he would never act again; that the members of his company were looking for fresh engagements. Then at last I did get discouraged. Just when my fortune seemed smooth and settled to have unemployment and starvation once again round the corner.

I did not know what to do this time. I wanted to be at hand should Mr. Mansfield's condition take a favourable turn; but my saved money had now come very nearly to an end. I tried to get a temporary job, but that failed. Then one day some one said, "You ought to try the Y.M.C.A. Bureau. They often have jobs going—not acting jobs." So I filled up an application form at the Y.M.C.A. Bureau, and did actually get a job—that of assistant to the Church of England chaplain to the Port of New York. This post requires some explaining.

I had to go out on a tug and board the liners, and interview arrivals in the United States, inquire as to their plans, which church they attended in England, and if they were Church of England give them guidance and help. In the few days during which I did this work—and I didn't like it—the English passengers were few.

The very first English-looking party that I approached gave me an uncomfortable two minutes. I inquired as ingratiatingly as I could: "Are you English?" It was an Irishman who answered, and his reply was: "I did not come to this country to be insulted. I'll throw you in the water!"

The pay was 2 dollars a day, but I sickened of the job, and gave it up before the week was out. Then—I still studied the theatrical papers—I read that Mr. Mansfield had gone to recuperate at Lakewood. My spirits rose again. I waited for the notice of rehearsals, but no message came to me. And at last I had what even to-day I regard as the bitterest moment of my life.

I was introduced to an actor at Kirk's, who mentioned casually that he was rehearsing for Mr. Mansfield's next piece. I felt astounded, mystified, heart-broken. I thought Mr. Mansfield had forgotten me. It seemed to me that

it was no use relying on the word of any actor. I wrote to Mr. Mansfield that night. I waited one day, two days, three days. There was no reply. Then, when I began to wonder miserably what my next step would be, for the earning of a bare living, a messenger came from the Garrick Theatre saying that they had been looking all over New York for me.

It was an almost unbelievable story. Mansfield had actually stopped a rehearsal and asked imperiously, "Where is that young Englishman I engaged?" The stage manager had replied that he didn't know where I was to be found. Mr. Mansfield had retorted—and I can imagine his air as he said it—"If you don't find him, you can consider yourself discharged."

So, after all this period of anxiety and worry, I did indeed become a member of the celebrated Mansfield company, and my pay was 40 dollars a week.

The play that was being rehearsed was *Rodion the Student*, an adaptation from Dostoievsky's *Crime and Punishment*. The part given to me was that of Boris, a bargee; and after two days I was made assistant stage manager. Which shows that my part was an unimportant one; but this work as stage manager proved exceedingly valuable to my after-career with Mr. Mansfield.

At the dress rehearsal I thought that it would be no bad idea if I could show Mr. Mansfield that I understood something about distinctive make-up. So I put on elaborate whiskers, and, feeling that I was indeed dressed for the part I tripped down the stairs to the stage. On my way I met Mr. Mansfield. He cast an eagle glance at me. "Who are you?" said he.

"I'm Cochran, Mr. Mansfield," I replied. All he said in answer was, "Good God!" I don't even know to this day what he meant.

I played my part, and apparently got through all right; at any rate, I was never reproved. Our season at the Garrick Theatre lasted for a month. Then we went on the road with repertory, the plays including *Beau Brummel*,

RICHARD MANSFIELD

Jekyll and Hyde, Parisian Romance, Prince Karl, and *Rodion the Student.* We started at Philadelphia, and there a new business manager sent on by Will M'Connell, our general manager (who remained in New York), joined us; and about this new manager, who was named Rodriguez, I must tell a story which illustrates Mansfield's puckish kind of humour.

Something had gone wrong with this business manager's luggage. Naturally he wanted to make a good first impression, so he did not want to appear in the theatre without evening clothes. He borrowed a dress suit from the local manager, felt rather awkward the whole of the evening, and thought it best to keep out of Mansfield's way until next day. In the morning a message reached him from Mr. Mansfield, saying he wanted to see him at his hotel.

Rodriguez knocked at the door of Mr. Mansfield's room. "Come in," said Mansfield, and Rodriguez, in entering, tripped over the head of a tiger mat. Mansfield, who was sitting at a writing-table with his back to the door, did not turn round; all he did was to ask carelessly, "Who is that?"

"Rodriguez, Mr. Mansfield," replied the business manager.

"Yes, I thought it would be," said Mr. Mansfield. "Why didn't you see me last night?"

"I thought you would be tired after the show," said Rodriguez. "After the SHOW—the SHOW," said Mansfield in a very pained tone. "How dreadful!" Rodriguez corrected himself apologetically, "The performance, I meant," he stammered out. "Oh, worse and worse," said Mansfield. "Horses perform—dogs perform—the theatre is not a circus, Rodriguez. You mean, I suppose, after the play."

Then, having made the unfortunate Rodriguez thoroughly uncomfortable, Mr. Mansfield asked casually, "Would you like a whisky-and-soda?" Rodriguez replied, "No thank you, I had some beer on the way up."

"What is beer?" demanded Mansfield, with mock

horror. "How dreadful! Thank you, that will do for this morning." Mansfield had a horror of anybody drinking in the daytime, and was testing Rodriguez. Nevertheless, Rodriguez, who was a good fellow, remained with the company for three years.

CHAPTER VI

Richard Mansfield's Special Railway Car—I cease to be an Actor and become Mansfield's Secretary—Mansfield the Irving of America—An Intellectual Man of Violent Temper—His Marked Mannerisms—His Appearance in Gilbert & Sullivan Opera—His First Sensational Hit—A Story about Stage China and Glass.

WE visited a good many towns on that tour, towns where we only gave one performance, as well as the bigger cities where we stayed a week or more. Mr. Mansfield, who had marked opinions upon the qualities of American hotels, travelled and lived in his own special railway car—a very comfortable affair; he stayed only at hotels where he was assured of the best of comfort and privacy.

One day—we were then in Pittsburg—Mr. Mansfield's dresser came to me at my hotel and said, "The Governor wants to see you in his car."

The car was in a siding, and when I entered it I found Mr. Mansfield with his wife, a charming woman, who had acted under the name of Beatrice Cameron. The car bore all the marks of habitation by cultured people; there were books and pictures, comfortable chairs, and everything that might be required by a man who considered his mental culture as well as his physical comfort.

"Sit down, Cochran," were Mr. Mansfield's first words to me. Then, after a few casual sentences, he said abruptly, "Do you think, Cochran, you'll ever be a good actor?"

My first feeling was one of intense anxiety. This surely was to be the prelude to dismissal. I replied that

I thought that I was improving, and that I was doing my best.

"But," persisted Mr. Mansfield, "do you think you'll ever be as good an actor as—as I am?"

I said that my hopes did not soar so high as that, but that I was not despondent about my future. It struck me that it was an extraordinary conversation. I had heard any number of stories about Mansfield's eccentricities, and I wondered to what all this was leading.

"But one doesn't come into the world merely to make a bread-and-butter living," went on my employer.

I agreed; beginning to think that it hardly mattered what I said in reply.

"Well," added Mansfield, coming this time to the point, "I've been watching you. I don't think you'll ever be a great actor, but you do your work as Graham's assistant very well indeed. How would you like to be my private secretary?"

I had no time to consider matters; my one thought was how to keep some sort of a job that would be a settled one without the worry of wondering where I was to sleep and where my next meal would come from. So I answered that I would like the post very much.

"Very well," said Mr. Mansfield; "you shall have 10 dollars a week extra, and be my private secretary."

I began my new job there and then. Mansfield produced a batch of letters. "Here is a note," he said, "from a man who wants me to sup with him to-morrow. I don't intend to go, but he is a valuable man, and I don't want him to be offended. Write a nice letter explaining that my engagements will not permit me to accept his kind invitation. Here is another, from a young actor who wants an engagement. Tell him I will see him when I get back to New York." There were other letters of various import to be answered; Mr. Mansfield left me to concoct the letters, interpreting his mind, but using my own phraseology. It was a test for my capabilities. I rushed off with the letters, wrote out the replies very care-

fully indeed, and brought them for Mr. Mansfield's signature just before the evening performance. Mr. Mansfield read them through, signed them, and remarked " Capital ! " and that was his first comment on my work as his secretary.

In my new job it was one of my duties when we arrived at a fresh town, and Mr. Mansfield was not staying at an hotel, to find a quiet siding for the private Pullman car in which he lived. As I have mentioned, he was not the easiest of men, and I always felt anxious until he told me that he was comfortable. At one town I found him what I thought was a perfectly beautiful place. It was outside the town, and there was a lovely garden the other side of the railway line, surrounding a very charming building. Mansfield expressed himself pleased with the site I had chosen for him. " What is that building with the charming garden ? " he said. He always liked a ready answer to his questions, and would be nervously irritable if I didn't immediately give him the information he asked for, and so I quickly said, " A young ladies' seminary, I believe, Mr. Mansfield." " How very charming," he replied. " It will be delightful to watch the charming girls at their play. Nothing more charming." When I went to see him in the evening at the theatre, he said quietly, " Did you say that was a ladies' school opposite where my car is standing ? " " Yes, that is what I was told."

" You damned fool," said he, with a grim smile, " it is the State Lunatic Asylum."

I had now to be in front of the theatre to receive Mr. Mansfield's friends, and gradually, as time went on, and I appeared to be working satisfactorily, he left the answering of most of his letters entirely to my judgment. A lot of our visits to places on this tour lasted only one night. All the big acting stars in America toured the country in this way. Seats were booked up a long time in advance, and a lot of money could be made.

Richard Mansfield at this time was the premier actor of America. He was indeed the Irving of America. But

there were curious traits in his character. He had had such a terrific struggle to make his way that he never really overcame a certain jealousy of English actors who came to America and received a good deal of attention. He was very touchy, for instance, about people like Irving and the Kendals when they came to America. He seemed to believe that they were encroaching upon his field; and this seems the more curious when one reflects that he himself was English by birth. Probably this feeling was born of his own financial failure when, as a very young man, he went to play in England. Irving let him have the Lyceum for a season; but it was in the summer, and financially the result was disastrous. His acting created enthusiasm among discriminating critics—he played *Richard III.* at the Globe, but it did not draw money. This was after the Lyceum season. Seymour Hicks, who remembers the performance, says that Mansfield's *Richard III.* was the finest he ever saw. Hicks indeed modelled his own performance of *Richard III.* on Mansfield's rendering. You will remember the red light from the stained-glass window that made Richard's hands look red—that originally was done by Mansfield.

Recently H. M. Walbrook, in the *Daily Telegraph*, wrote: "In the August of 1888, at the Lyceum, Richard Mansfield appeared for the first time in London in *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde.* The first entry of Hyde in the version presented (an excellent one, by Dr. T. Russell Sullivan) came at the end of the first act. The ill-shaped monster appeared in the moonlight behind a French window, with his hands up to his head, and making a horrible hissing noise. Never did I see an audience so petrified."

Mansfield was a man of violent temper. Not that he was bad-hearted, nor at bottom vindictive; but he showed impatience and resentment when things happened at the theatre that resulted from lack of care in preparation, and from general lack of intelligence. Then he would fume and rage, and refuse to be comforted even by his wife. When

he opened a new theatre at Cleveland, Ohio, the curtain at the end of the first act would not come down, and the stage tableau had to be broken so that Mansfield and the other actors could get off the stage. When the stage had been set for Act II., Mansfield was nowhere to be found. He had left the theatre and gone to his hotel, and locked himself up. He was so petulant that he broke up the furniture in his room. Nothing would induce him to come out to complete the play. This cost him a lot of money, as the local manager got heavy damages in a suit which he brought.

Mansfield was one of the most intellectual actors of our time. He was possessed of a high sense of criticism of his own acting, and was a great artist in the sense that he bent his intelligence and his gifts towards achieving a definite theatrical effect. Sometimes he gave readings with which good judges disagreed; but always there was reason behind it—at any rate reason that satisfied himself. Like most actors of personality, he possessed marked mannerisms. He had a really beautiful voice—I think he might have made a singer of the first class—and certainly he was a fine musician. Physically he was very strong, but short for his commanding personality. In that way he was disappointing.

His mother was a Russian opera singer, and he was born in Heligoland, when it was an English possession. He was educated at Derby Grammar School, and began as a painter before he took to the stage. Once, with sardonic humour, he told me that when he was playing at the Lyceum Frith, the artist, came to him and said, "Mansfield, it's a great pity you didn't stick to painting." This was after his great success in America. I believe that his first part was Sir Joseph Porter in *The Pirates of Penzance*, which he played in a touring company with August van Biene, of *Broken Melody* fame, as the musical director. Van Biene said to him, "I know why you were engaged as principal comedian, Mansfield—because you travel with such beautiful luggage."

When first in America he made minor successes in character parts in various comic operas; then he got an engagement as a small-part man with the Union Square Stock Company—a famous organisation of those days. The manager, Mr. A. M. Palmer, an erudite man, had been librarian of a celebrated institution. Not many people know it, but there is a picture at Skindle's at Maidenhead, which includes A. M. Palmer. It is a group that contains the portraits of William Terriss and Sir Augustus Harris. The wrong name is under the portrait of Palmer, who, because he had white whiskers, is labelled "Mr. Charles Morton," who used to run the Palace Theatre.

The opportunity which gave Mansfield his chance to become famous occurred when a play called *A Parisian Romance* was to be produced by the Union Square Company, and there was a part, that of Baron Chevrial, which Stoddart, the leading actor, declined to play, as being unworthy of him. Mansfield, then only a small-part man, begged Palmer to let him play it, and with a certain amount of misgiving Palmer agreed.

In the play, the Baron Chevrial, while proposing the toast of "Woman" at a great stage supper-party, was stricken with paralysis. Mansfield made a sensational hit; next morning all the New York papers spoke of the arrival of a new actor—Mansfield was famous. Mansfield immediately laid himself out to let it be known that he was aware of this. On the first night the table for the supper was exquisitely set with costly glass and china. At the end of his big scene Mansfield fell across the table, smashing glass and china, and spilling the wine indiscriminately. The effect was thrilling. On the second night, the manager, for reasons of economy, wished to have the table laid with less and not such costly glass and china. Before the supper scene Mansfield walked on the stage to look at the table, and refused to go on unless it were laid exactly as on the first night. Mr. Palmer was sent for, but Mansfield was adamant, and property men had to be

sent to the Union Square Hotel for the best glass and china—meanwhile the curtain remained down. "Remember," said A. M. Palmer, in telling me the story, "Mansfield had been the day before an unknown small-part actor."

CHAPTER VII

Mansfield produces Bernard Shaw's *Arms and the Man*—His Correspondence with Shaw about *Cæsar and Cleopatra*—The Strange Case of *Castle Sombras*—A Serious Play that Mansfield turned into a Burlesque—An Angry Dialogue between Mansfield and Zangwill—As Mansfield's Secretary I meet Beerbohm Tree, Gerald du Maurier, Arthur Bourchier, Henry Vibart, and Mabel Beardsley—I have a Row with Mansfield and walk off the Car—E. H. Henley, Brother of W. E. Henley, one of the very best Actors I have seen—We start a School of Acting in New York.

IT was when I was first with Mansfield that Bernard Shaw and his dramatic work began to be known outside literary circles in England. *Arms and the Man* was the first Shaw play that Mansfield produced in America. It had been done in London at the Avenue Theatre by Miss Horniman, and run at a loss; but in the United States it became one of the popular pieces of Mansfield's repertoire. After this, Mansfield was always asking Shaw for another play. Ultimately he produced *The Devil's Disciple*, which was also a big American success. Shaw sent Mansfield *Cæsar and Cleopatra*; but Mansfield didn't like the play, and thought it was not suited to him. I remember that Mansfield wrote and told Shaw that he thought the part of Cleopatra should be played by Miss Ada Reeve. This caused Shaw to write Mansfield a characteristic letter. He said he was grateful to Mansfield for making his plays known in America, and much wanted him to do *Cæsar and Cleopatra*. If Mansfield would not do it, he said he would give it to Irving or Tree, as he did not really need a great actor for his great play.

It was also about this time that Mansfield accepted a play by Mr. Greenhough Smith, of the *Strand Magazine*. It

was entitled *Castle Sombras*, and was all about a Black Knight in a mysterious castle, who saw no one from the outer world. And now I will relate a curious thing. *Castle Sombras* was rehearsed as a very serious play. Mansfield produced it in Chicago, and in all the preliminary announcements the "mystery" of the knight was emphasised. Mansfield played the part, and appeared in deep black, looking intensely sombre. Somehow his first line struck the audience as funny, and everything he said after that went to a ripple of laughter. When there came a dagger-fight, in which the duellists were blindfolded, and, searching for each other, stabbed the furniture and the walls, the audience lay back and rocked with merriment. We, who knew that the whole thing was intended as a serious play, were on tenterhooks wondering what Mansfield in his wrath would do after the first act. Mrs. Mansfield had come from New York to see the first performance, and she went behind with me during the first interval. "Dick, Dick," she said, as soon as she saw her husband, "isn't this terrible? They are all laughing."

"What else did you expect, my dear?" returned Mansfield. He gave no hint that he had expected anything from the audience but laughter. He pretended he had known all along that it was a burlesque melodrama, and from that moment he played it like that. The piece was a roaring success. At the end of the first act the newspaper critics undoubtedly were puzzled; but I, having received the cue from Mansfield, talked in the lobby to every one I could about the piece as burlesque, and told the manager and every one else to do the same. The result was that, next morning, most of the critics dealt with the play as one of the cleverest burlesques of romantic melodrama ever written. Some writers compared Mr. Greenhough Smith to Bernard Shaw. I believe that Mr. Greenhough Smith, who was in London, wondered greatly when he received his press cuttings. Later, I believe he was inclined to be annoyed. But I have always held that Mansfield's presence of mind and unusual control turned a possible failure into

a very big success At the same time I must repeat that Mansfield did rehearse the play as a romantic drama.

I can tell a story of Mansfield and Mr. Israel Zangwill. *Cyrano de Bergerac* had been produced with great success in Paris, and, as in the case of most big Paris and London successes, much attention had been given it in New York —probably Cyrano's famous nose had caught the popular imagination. So when Mansfield arranged to produce Rostand's play, the first night at the Garden Theatre was greatly anticipated. It was, one might almost say, the first Mansfield production in which the New York critics accepted Mansfield as a serious actor, on the same level that Irving and Wyndham were reckoned in London. With the exception perhaps of Ditthmar, of the *New York Times*, and William Winter, the great Shakespearean authority, never, till the Cyrano production, did the critics allow their readers to forget that Mansfield first came to New York to appear in Gilbert and Sullivan. But on this night Mansfield took the audience by storm. At the end of the play, after thanking the audience, he said he was very proud because that house, representing the intelligence and the best elements of America, had applauded him, although probably next day they would be told they were not very intelligent because his performance was really very bad, and not coming from Europe, could not possibly be first class. As a matter of fact, next day the leading critics unreservedly hailed him as one of the great actors of the day.

Mr. Zangwill was in a stage box near to the pass-door on the memorable first night. He asked me if he could see Mansfield, and I promised that I would take him through when Mansfield had made his final bow. Mansfield objected very much to people entering his dressing-room without being announced. When, the play over, I saw Zangwill make straight for the pass-door, I rushed after him as quickly as I could, intending to stop him until I had had the opportunity of taking in his name to Mansfield. But the crowd in the theatre delayed

me, and Zangwill was already in Mansfield's dressing-room when I got there. I heard him say, "Well, Mansfield, I think your performance was very adequate." Mansfield's nerves were naturally on edge, and his reply was: "Why do you burst into my dressing-room, and why do you patronise me? Tell me, what exactly do you mean by 'adequate'?"

"My dear Mansfield," said Mr. Zangwill, "I meant that in the English version you cannot possibly reveal the nuances of the French original."

Mansfield, who spoke French fluently, went off into rapid French. It was obvious that the speed at which he spoke puzzled Zangwill. And Mansfield, pointing an accusing finger, said angrily, "Tell me, do you speak French? No, obviously you don't know French. You are a fraud." And, with a wide gesture, he called to his dresser, "Show Mr. Zangwill out."

And Mr. Zangwill left the dressing-room, stumbling over some stage braces into the darkness.

There is a pendant to this story. A short while ago Mr. Zangwill wrote to me, saying, "I don't know whether we have met, but I am sending you my book, *The Cockpit*." I thanked him and reminded him about our meeting at the Garden Theatre in New York. "I conducted you to the stage door afterwards," I said, and he replied, "I remember very well."

I met Sir Herbert Beerbohm Tree for the first time while I was Mansfield's secretary. It was at supper at Mansfield's house. Gerald du Maurier was in the company, and Fitzroy Gardiner was his manager. Tree wasn't doing very well in America. After the supper-party he asked me to lunch, and I was able to give him information about stage business in New York, who were the influential people on the press, and things like that. When we parted Tree said, "If ever you come to London, come and see me; I shall be happy to have you. There is room for young men like you in London."

It was also on some tour of Mansfield's that in Wash-

ington I first met Mr. Arthur Bourchier, who was in America in a piece called *The Chili Widow*. Mansfield asked some members of the company to supper at his hotel, and one was Miss Mabel Beardsley, sister of Aubrey Beardsley ; I hadn't seen her since I was a boy at Brighton. Beardsley was now dead, and his sister was making her living on the stage. She was not a great actress, but she was a brilliant woman. She wrote a little for papers like the *Saturday Review*, and was a most delightful conversationalist. *The Chili Widow* tour was finishing, so I got Mansfield to engage Miss Beardsley, and also Mr. Henry Vibart, who is still acting in London. Mansfield was always telling Mabel Beardsley that she could not act ; but he liked her, as she made his supper-parties very agreeable.

Some time after this I had a row with Mansfield. I cannot remember all the details, but it was in Cleveland, Ohio. I thought he was unjust to me, and we had words on the car ; and I left him there and then, walked off the car, and did not rejoin. I returned to New York, and fell in with Edward John Henley, a brother of W. E. Henley, the poet. E. J. Henley was considered one of the best actors in America. He had appeared in England at the Gaiety Theatre, where an imitation by him of Henry Irving caused something of a sensation—it was so cruelly clever. Irving, indeed, objected vigorously, and John Hollinghead withdrew it. Henley, still a young man, went with an English company to America to play *Deacon Brodie*, a play by W. E. Henley and R. L. Stevenson. The venture was, I believe, financed by Redfern, the costumier, and in the company was that charming actress Miss Carrie Coote, a sister of Bert Coote, the comedian, who has been much longer on the stage than you would believe from his appearance. E. J. Henley became one of the leading dramatic actors of America. Going back a long while, and endeavouring to revive youthful impressions, I shall always class Henley as one of the very best actors I have seen He had technique, and personality, and now and again his acting showed vivid flashes of

ELLEN TERRY, BY AUBREY BEARDSLEY
Original Drawing in Mrs. Cochran's Collection.

genius; but he did not possess the stability and the character possessed by men like Irving and Wyndham, who reach the really high positions on the stage. Henley, I am afraid, was often " on the drink," and he ultimately died of consumption of the throat in England.

Through Ted Henley I had the privilege of meeting his great brother. My admiration for W. E. was tremendous, and of the many distinguished people I met on my return to London my acquaintanceship—I might also say friendship—with this wonderful man gave me the greatest amount of pride. I recall the effect it had upon some of my friends when I told them I had sat in Henley's box during a performance at the Garrick Theatre of *Admiral Guinea,* which Henley wrote in conjunction with Robert Louis Stevenson. He did not think much of the acting, and expressed his views most vigorously. E. J. was fond of saying that his brother was the only Anglo-Saxon who could swear with a more extensive vocabulary than he could.

Henley and I started a school of acting in New York. I looked after the business side. We gave a performance of *John Gabriel Borkman*—that was my very first essay in management. We had associated with us Mr. James Huneker, the literary critic; Percival Pollard, author of a delightful book, *Masks and Minstrels of New Germany*; and other well-known literary folk. The performance was a success, and Henley certainly proved himself one of the best actors of Ibsen in English. A little while afterwards he arranged for an open-air performance of a *Midsummer Night's Dream.* It was to be in Central Park, and I remember that I was cast for the part of Snug the Joiner. But it rained heavily. We gave up the project of Central Park, and played in Madison Square Garden, which since then has been the scene of so many famous boxing exhibitions. In some ways this production of ours might be said to have been a forerunner of Reinhardt's productions, as we played in an arena. When, in the early days of the war, Ethel Irving played *The Three Daughters of*

M. Dupont, at the Ambassadors', her stage manager came to me and said, "Do you remember me, Mr. Cochran?" "Yes," I said; "something over a quarter of a century ago we played together in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in Madison Square Garden." I had never seen him since.

Edmund D. Lyons played Bottom in this production of ours in Madison Square Garden. He was one of the finest Shakespearean clowns. He had gone to America with Henley and Stevenson's *Deacon Brodie,* as had that very well-known actor John Glendinning. Lyons' father had run a theatre in Edinburgh. "Teddie Lyons," as we called him, was a great old character—an actor of the old school. He always wore a frock coat and tall hat all the years I knew him—they seemed to be the same coat and the same hat. He slept in them on night journeys, and never thought of carrying an umbrella to protect the silk hat when it rained. Nor could we persuade him to have his hat ironed. I asked him why he didn't carry an umbrella. "I did have one," he replied; "but it blew over Tobermory thirty-five years ago."

CHAPTER VIII

A Few Months in England, and then I return to Richard Mansfield—His Pressing Liabilities—When he told me to sell his House and Mrs. Mansfield's Collection of Works of Art—Harry Bagge—" Put him on before the Overture "—A Mansfield Rebuke—Mansfield's Butler, Holland—How he left the Theatre in the Middle of *Richard III.*

IT was my intention when I started these recollections, of happenings in my life, to confine them to such incidents as brought me in touch with people in whom the wide public would perhaps be more interested than in the doings of myself. Up to now I have preserved something of a chronological order; but that part of my life spent with Richard Mansfield appears to me of so much importance that I feel I must revert to the first part of that association before telling how I fared when I made my first attempt to establish myself in London.

In referring to the first part of my association, it is perhaps necessary to say that, after an interval of less than a year in England, I returned to act as Mr. Mansfield's private secretary—how and why I will show later.

Notwithstanding Richard Mansfield's position as an actor in America, it was not until after many years of courageous effort that he established himself on a firm financial footing. When I joined him he had involved himself heavily with the lease of the Garrick Theatre, New York, and before that his experiments in London at the Lyceum and Globe Theatres had accumulated for him a mass of indebtedness from which he took many years to extricate himself.

Apropos of the naming of his New York theatre, I would say that Garrick attained Mansfield's ideal as an actor.

His combination of social, literary, and dramatic abilities, and his refusal to be bound by tradition, were the qualities which appealed to my old friend and employer. In the equipment and conduct of his playhouse, culture and good taste were evident ; but long runs for plays were unknown in New York in those days, and Mansfield became a resident actor-manager before his time.

His illness, which nearly lost me my engagement, necessitated the production of unsuccessful plays to keep the New York Theatre warm, and increased his losses. When Mansfield said farewell at the Garrick Theatre, prior to what was my last tour with him, I recollect his speech before the curtain. He said :

> " It occurred to me, and it was suggested to me by my entourage, that we needed something to eat, and I didn't see that it was possible to obtain the wherewithal to get it so long as I remained in New York. I assure you there is no place where it is so difficult to win pecuniary success as in New York, and for that reason I am compelled to go to what you are pleased to call the provinces."

His biographer, Mr. Paul Wilstach, in referring to the episode, quotes a verse spoken by David Garrick from his own stage in London 145 years earlier :

> " For though we actors one and all agree
> Boldly to struggle for our vanity—
> If want comes on, importance must retreat ;
> Our first great ruling passion is—to eat ! "

Wilstach was introduced to Mansfield by me at a supper-party in Washington. He was at that time the dramatic critic of a Washington paper. He had written a most interesting analysis of Mansfield as an actor, which I had brought to the attention of the latter, who was not at that time reading any newspapers. It was so much a habit of the press to write sensational and untrue stories, about Mansfield's supposed eccentricities, that he had

sworn to read no papers, and was, to the best of my belief, faithfully keeping his vow. Later, Mansfield invited Wilstach to join him as press representative and advance agent, and he remained in that position upwards of ten years, enjoying the close confidence of Mansfield, and was therefore most qualified to write a biography.

It was the custom for most theatres to close during the summer months while the actors took a rest. The big stars went to Europe, to their country homes, on yachting trips, and so on, and so forth. At the conclusion of my first tour with Mansfield I passed a pleasant summer with him, partly at the American Yacht Club, Rye. I had no work to do, and I found the great actor a most congenial and delightful companion.

The next season commenced on the road, and on the day we were to leave New York I went—an hour or so before the departure of the train from the Great Central Station—to see that everything was all right with the private car, and whether Mansfield had any instructions for me. To my intense astonishment he told me that I was not to go with himself and the rest of the company, but was to stay in New York.

"Go to my house," he said, "and make yourself at home. The servants have instructions to look after you; while you are staying there the house is yours. I have something important for you to do, which means a great deal to me, and which should be a test of your executive powers."

He explained that a substantial sum of money was necessary to wipe out pressing liabilities, and he had decided to sell lock, stock, and barrel, the contents of the house in West 80th Street, which some years previously he had given to Mrs. Mansfield. The contents were to be advertised as "Mrs. Richard Mansfield's collection of antiquities and works of art." I was to prepare a catalogue, advertise them in the way most likely to create interest, make arrangements for an auction, and get as much money as I could. The task was a pretty big one, but I think I

accomplished it successfully, and it raised me several points in Mr. Mansfield's favour. I gave practically every object in the house some value by associating it with some event in Mansfield's life, or as a gift from some distinguished person. I secured the assistance of a number of my literary and artistic friends, and, with their help, compiled a catalogue, printed on costly paper and embellished with ribbons and seals, which was in itself almost a work of art. I secured the rooms of the American Art Association in Madison Square for the exhibition of the articles before the auction. The papers devoted columns to the sale, and a large number of curiosity-seekers were attracted. Mansfield had collected his furniture and pictures with great taste, although—with the exception of some tapestry—there were not many individual articles in the house of great value. The result was that, because of their association, small articles brought prices much greater than their original value; but the good things, like the tapestries, were bought in because there were no satisfactory bids. I remember that a tea-kettle, which could have been purchased now for about 5 dollars, fetched 27 dollars. Four prints which I had purchased in Hollywell Street for a penny, and given to Mansfield, brought 30 dollars apiece. The result of the sale was financially satisfactory, and Mansfield's most valued possessions remained unsold. Most of the New York papers gave glowing descriptions of the beautiful things offered for sale, but a humorous writer named Ford, in the *Journal* I think it was, treated the matter in a sarcastic vein. He described the "exquisite tea-kettle—undoubtedly a true Macy" (Macy's was a Department Store like Selfridge's)—"the marvellous Italian throne-chair, undoubtedly used by Nero . . . in the Barnum & Bailey Spectacle at Madison Square Garden."

During my stay at Mansfield's house I ran across an old friend named Harry Bagge. Harry Bagge was an Englishman whom, not very long ago, I encountered in Fleet Street—I believe he was on the *Daily Mail*. Bagge had been a minor actor in England, mainly at the old

Princess's Theatre in Oxford Street, and had married the beautiful Helen Forsyth, who was one of the photographic beauties of the day.

Bagge had, I believe, at one time money of his own, and had been rather a well-known man-about-town in the days of the Pelican Club. He became very hard up, and Sam Adams engaged him to appear at the old Trocadero Music-Hall. In evening dress he sang what were called " Motto Songs," and finished with the recitation of George R. Sims' " Lifeboat." His efforts were so unsuited to the music-hall audience of the period that Sam Adams, while wishing to give Bagge a salary, was fearful of upsetting his public, so he put him on as the first turn. In the West End, and at the Trocadero especially, music-hall audiences were not early comers.

One day, however, Sam Adams strolled into the Hall while Bagge's turn was going on, and noticed there were at least half a dozen people in the stalls. " This will never do," he said ; " from to-morrow night onwards Bagge must be on before the overture." Sam Adams afterwards organised a benefit performance for Bagge, which gave him funds with which to go to America.

Bagge had ups and downs in New York—a little more " down " than " up," I think, generally. Truth to say he was not a very good actor, but a most amusing fellow. He was particularly interested in my association with Mansfield, because on his arrival in America he had called on that actor, who received him at breakfast. Bagge told a story against himself of how he enlarged upon what he could do, and, thinking that Mansfield would be impressed, reeled off the names of the well-known Club men in New York with whom he was on hail-fellow-well-met terms. When Bagge paused for breath, Mansfield said, " Yes, Mr. Bagge, I might perhaps give you an engagement, but do you think you could *look* like a gentleman on the stage ? "

One night Bagge was dining with me at Mansfield's house, and was endeavouring to impress the butler, a great character named Holland, who was formerly with the

Tennyson family. "When I was in the Service," he said to Holland. "In whose service?" was Holland's reply.

Years afterwards Bagge went on to the reporters' staff of the *New York World*. It was an unwritten law that if a reporter had an assignment, and failed to get a story, he would be fired. Bagge was sent to interview John D. Rockefeller. He hung around for days, but could not get a sight of the old man. Back he went to the office, and was sitting at his desk writing out his resignation when Goddard, the editor, saw him. "What are you doing, Bagge?" he said. The latter started to explain that he was writing out his resignation. "I have done everything possible," he said. "I have been up the front steps and down the area, with sheet iron in the seat of my trousers. I have been kicked out and thrown out. Finally I hid in the shrubbery, and made a noise like dividends—and still the old man would not come out." This amused Goddard so much that Bagge retained his job.

The butler, Holland, to whom I have just referred, was a wonderful old character. In his heart of hearts he felt he was rather belittling himself by being in the service of an actor. He had never seen Mansfield on the stage; but I finally persuaded him to accept seats for a performance of *Richard III*. At the first interval I met him in the vestibule, and his comment was: "Undoubtedly he is a great h'artist!" In the middle of the Dream Scene I saw Holland seize his hat, coat, and umbrella and rush down the aisle. "Where are you going?" I said. "This is the great scene." "I know," he said; "he is a great h'artist all right, but he's spotted me, and he's carrying on something awful, just like he did once at home when I smashed one of his precious antics!" (antiques).

CHAPTER IX

I have a Fight at the First Performance of *The Devil's Disciple*—Back to England—The Skipper who threw *Martin Chuzzlewit* overboard—Charles Brookfield and *Tit-Bits*—Supper at Beerbohm Tree's House—My Last Acting Part—What W. S. Penley said about it—I try Journalism—At William Terris' Funeral—The Café Royal at the *Apéritif* Hour—When Toulouse Lautrec was an Habitué—Ranger Gull and Myself do a Deal with John Kensit—Richard Mansfield comes to London and takes me back to America—The Production of *Cyrano de Bergerac*—When Mansfield made Margaret Anglin weep at Rehearsals—An Extraordinary Claim for Royalties.

I SHOULD be sorry if the publication of these reminiscences should gain for me the reputation of being inclined to the cup that cheers. Still, apart from what I have already recounted about what befell me through drinking illicit whisky in Urbana, Ohio, I feel compelled to tell the story of another event in my life, which came about through an overdose of cocktails. Indirectly, it made a great change in my life, for it determined me to leave New York for a time and return to England.

In October, 1897, Mansfield produced, at the Fifth Avenue Theatre, George Bernard Shaw's *The Devil's Disciple*. Although I was no longer associated with Mansfield I had an admiration amounting almost to reverence for him, and had also become a Shaw enthusiast. I had read *The Devil's Disciple*, and was most keen that Mansfield should play the part of Dick Dudgeon. I had talked a great deal about the play with him, and had taken some part in the correspondence between Shaw and himself in regard to changing Essie from a young girl of eighteen or so to a child of ten. Mansfield knew his public, and thought he could get more sympathetic interest with the character treated that way.

Shaw objected, but Mansfield persisted, and I think the box-office receipts eventually won over the author to the Mansfield view. It must be remembered that at this time Shaw was not a box-office attraction in England, and his royalties from America must have been welcome.

On the day of the production I could hardly contain my excitement. Unfortunately I went into Kirk's before dinner-time, and instead of one cocktail with E. J. Henley, Royden Erlynne, and other English actors who were there, I must have run into double figures ; also I did not realise that I was a bit over the odds when I purchased a ticket. When I presented the ticket at the entrance to the auditorium, Joe Dillon, Mansfield's acting-manager, refused me admittance. He said I was tight, and perhaps he was right, although I was indignant about his assertion at the time. The Irish in me was aroused, particularly as I did not like Dillon. I insisted on forcing my way past the attendants. Dillon laid hands on me, and I let fly at him. The attendants joined in, and a rough-and-tumble ensued. That it was a memorable fight was placed upon record by Leander Richardson in the *Morning Telegraph* on the following day. Richardson, formerly proprietor of the *Dramatic News*, was at that time writing most interesting gossip for the *Telegraph*, and he came into the theatre when the scrap was at its height. He described it blow for blow, move for move, in the parlance of the prize ring, of which he was an authority. It was certainly amusing reading, and, if his description be true, there may be some truth in his words—that I " had missed my vocation," as, judging by my display, I " would have been a shining ornament of the roped arena."

After the scuffle, which lasted five minutes or more, by which time I had divested myself of my coat and waistcoat, I was taken away in one of Macy's wagons, which happened to be standing outside the theatre, to Jefferson Market Police Court, where I spent a few hours until Mansfield sent down and bailed me out.

When I met Mansfield later he did not refer to this

episode; but I am told that the account of the fight pleased him almost more than his success with *The Devil's Disciple*. I was heartily ashamed of myself, and thought that it would be as well to give New York a rest. I had been in America nearly seven years without returning home. I had always had a yearning to try my luck in England, so I induced Scotson Clark, who accompanied me on my first voyage to New York, to return home with me. Neither of us were flush with funds, and we were not slow to fall in with the offer of a friend, who had some connection with the shipping business, to return on a tramp steamer which sailed from New York to Leith. Ourselves and a Scotch skipper, whose ship had been wrecked, were the only passengers.

The voyage took seventeen days. At every midday meal the skipper made the same hearty joke when the suet pudding was served. "Do you boys like pudding ends?" he would say. "Well, me and my mate do." Then he would divide the pudding in the middle and put the two halves on two plates. We always laughed heartily.

The skipper of the ship was a Scotch Presbyterian. On the first Sunday I was reading *Martin Chuzzlewit*; he came behind me and, in a voice charged with pious wrath, snatched the book from my hands.

"Wud ye bring down the wrath of God on the vessel?" he said; "reading novels on the Sabbath? Read God's Holy Word!" And he flung the book overboard.

We soon exhausted the ship's library; but I found several copies of *Tit-Bits*. These I read over and over again, and learned by heart how many pill-boxes, piled one on top of the other, would reach the top of St. Paul's; how many postage stamps it would take to cover the surface of the globe; and a multitude of such-like information. Despite my breach of the Sabbath, we parted on excellent terms with the captain and crew of the ship.

My first impressions of Edinburgh were the number of pretty girls on Princes Street, the excellence and cheapness

of the whisky, and a feeling of great disappointment that the local music-hall, the Empire, had lost the atmosphere which I associated with the British music-hall. The chairman had gone ; the turns were announced by numbers ; and there was lacking that convivial atmosphere of the old music-hall, which I shall always think was the most representative form of British entertainment. It was an institution that made for individuality among the performers, and produced geniuses like Dan Leno, Charles Godfrey, Marie Lloyd, Jennie Hill, and Vesta Tilley.

We caught the night train from Edinburgh, and arrived in London to find ourselves in the midst of a dense fog. I had heard of London fogs, but had never before seen one. It must be remembered that I was a country boy, and before going to America had passed only an occasional week in town. I had recollections of a real English breakfast at the Tavistock Hotel with my father, and had determined to spend at least the first day or so at that hotel. I loved the idea of being near Covent Garden and the National Sporting Club. During my seven years in America everything in England had become rose-coloured ; and, like all returning travellers, I was bound to suffer some disappointments. But, at any rate, the Tavistock Hotel was not to furnish any. The plain, comfortable bedroom, the warm bath, the friendly but courteous attentions of the valet, brought before me most vividly the England of which I had dreamed. The breakfast-room was what I expected it to be, the waiters were of the type Dickens had made dear to us, but which now have disappeared except at a few old hostelries like The Mitre at Hampton Court. It seemed that we had never tasted such food as our grilled sole, our kidneys and bacon, and our toast and marmalade.

Henry Vibart was the first friend to search me out and introduce me to some London actors, managers, and agents, and help me to get a footing. I felt rather strange, because when I left New York I knew most people in the business.

I called on Mabel Beardsley, Aubrey Beardsley's

beautiful sister, whom I had known since she was a little girl. She was giving a large tea-party, and I met there Mrs. Ada Leverson, Max Beerbohm, Will Rothenstein, Robert Ross, the biographer and faithful friend of Oscar Wilde, Walter Sickert, Ricketts and J. J. Shannon, the painters, Julius Sampson the art critic, and Charles Brookfield. I felt somewhat shy, and the conversation, rather like Yellow Book dialogues, seemed a foreign talk to me. But everybody was very kind, perhaps because I had been an intimate friend of Aubrey Beardsley long before any of them knew him. Poor Aubrey had not been long dead, and Mabel gave me a great many of his personal belongings. In the general conversation some one spoke about an odd little post office, and said it must surely be the most curious post office in the world. This gave me an opportunity, and I remarked casually that in the Straits of Magellan there was what was, perhaps, the most curious of all post offices, a floating buoy with a box in which the sailors posted letters that were collected by passing ships.

" Ah ! " observed Charles Brookfield drily, " I see that like myself you read *Tit-Bits* " ; and I told him how I had found myself with nothing else to read on the voyage home. Brookfield pretended that he studied *Tit-Bits* regularly, and proved it by rolling off statistics about pins, letters in the Bible, Dutch cheese, the Pyramids, and a host of other things.

I became very friendly with Brookfield. I am not sure whether Brookfield or Maurice Barrymore was the wittiest man I have met. One story I recall is the following :

A friend introduced Barrymore to a dramatic critic who had consistently slated him. The critic's name, I believe, was Ford.

" Meet Mr. Ford," said the friend.

Barrymore shook hands.

" You've written some desperately insulting things about me," he said, looking into the critic's face ; " but now I see you my anger is turned to sympathy."

" Oh, then you read my criticisms," replied Ford.

"Yes," said Barrymore; "I am a late riser, and when I buy my paper the one you write for is generally the only one left on the news-stand."

I took advantage of Beerbohm Tree's invitation to call on him when I came to London, and he received me most hospitably; offered me a box at his theatre, and invited me to supper at his house, where I met Lady Tree, who afterwards played for me at the St. Martin's, and at the New Oxford Theatre. But a day or two later, when I tackled Tree for a job, he advised me to return to America, where the chances were more plentiful. But I made up my mind to stay in London.

One day I met Mark Ambient, who had written a play for Penley called *A Little Ray of Sunshine.* It was to be given a trial run in small Kentish towns like Ashford and Sevenoaks for a week. Ambient introduced me to Penley, who engaged me to play the part of an old solicitor. I had one good scene, where I read a will, and got laughs from the country folk to whom we played; but Penley did not engage me for the run at the Royalty. The part was cut out. Ambient told me that Penley would not have me because he did not want another comedy part in the play.

"The little beggar is funny," Penley said. "But they pay to see *me* being funny. We don't want another funny man."

That was my last acting part.

I found it very difficult to get a footing in English theatrical circles. My American experience seemed to carry little weight. Money became short, and I had to do something for a living. I ran across Henry Hess, who owned a paper called the *Critic.* It had been known as the *African Critic,* but Hess was now trying to make it a more general weekly, dealing with the City, literature, and politics. It was edited by William Purvis. Charles Frohman was at the time becoming an influence in the London theatre, and the papers were discussing the possibilities of an American Theatrical Trust. Richard Mansfield and

other prominent actor-managers had fought the American Trust, so I persuaded Hess to let me write an article, which I called " Too Much Frohman." Frohman at the time was running *Too Much Johnson* at the Garrick Theatre, and Hess made a feature of my article, and flooded the West End with sandwich men. It caused a good deal of comment, and was quoted extensively, and as a result I got a commission from Hess to do a weekly article. I also wrote for *St. Paul's*—an illustrated paper on the lines of the *Sketch* and *Tatler*—an appreciation of Mansfield, with a number of photographs of him in different characters. *The Belle of New York* had started its long run, and, meeting Colonel Newnham Davis at a supper-party, I arranged with him to do a " cod " interview with Edna May and Dan Daly, giving, in alleged Americanese, their impressions of London. Newnham Davis liked the article sufficiently to give me more work for the *Man of the World*, a weekly he was editing, which I remember was printed on blue paper. Through this association I met that genius of his day, Arthur Binstead, " Tale Pitcher " of the *Pink 'Un*, and Binstead was an intimate friend of mine up to his death, and on occasion acted as press representative to some of my amusement ventures.

Do not let it be imagined that I was making a fortune from these journalistic activities. I was, indeed, getting desperately hard up, and reached a stage where I had not enough to pay for my board and lodging. I had the loan of a studio in New Court, Lincoln's Inn, from David Whitelaw and Pebryhn Stanlaws, whom I had met in America, when they were designing posters on the lines of the Beggarstaff Brothers. I remember sitting up one night to write an article on Aubrey Beardsley's schooldays, which I sold the next morning to Sidney Ransom, who was running a paper called the *Poster*. I had no fire in the studio, it was bitterly cold, and I was hungry. This article was actually written for my breakfast ! Ransom was very generous ; I do not remember the exact sum he gave me, but it was something quite handsome for so small a publication.

The contribution was valuable to him, because I enabled him to reproduce some of Beardsley's schoolboy drawings. The article and the illustrations were referred to in several of the art periodicals of the day.

Vibart had introduced me to Rules' in Maiden Lane, and other actors' haunts, and it was in Rules' that I heard of the murder of William Terris. The effect upon the theatrical profession was staggering. I went to the funeral with an actor named Buckley.

I became a frequenter, at the *apéritif* hour, of the Café Royal. There I met Ranger Gull, who about this time became known through his book, *The Hypocrite*, but changed his writing name to Guy Thorne, when he published *When it was Dark*; Reggie Bacchus, a brilliant and attractive young man, who probably failed to do big things because he had a private income; Ernest Dowson, the unfortunate poet; Willie Wilde—Oscar Wilde's brother; Augustus Moore; Charles Condor, the painter of exquisite fans; Mostyn Pigott, whose weekly verses in the *World* and after-dinner speeches were considered models of polished wit; Jimmy Pryde and William Nicholson, who were doing posters together as the Beggarstaff Brothers; and Gordon Craig, who showed us some of his woodcuts. I always think that Gordon Craig gained a good deal of inspiration from Pryde, who had theories in regard to the stage similar to those which Craig had so long advocated.

It was also at the Café Royal that I met Henri de Toulouse Lautrec, the remarkable French painter. He was seated at one of the marble tables talking to Gus Moore, who introduced me. Lautrec, with his black beard, thick lips, pince-nez, and bowler hat tilted forward over his nose, struck me as an odd-looking man. He spoke English well, and I got along splendidly with him because he was very interested in Beardsley; and it was the Café Royal that had afforded Beardsley much of his inspiration. I had seen some of Lautrec's work reproduced in the illustrated papers—particularly his posters and illustrations for *La Revue Blanche*. His drawings of Ida

L'Homme Canon

Coloured Drawing by the French genius, Henri de Toulouse Lautrec.
(In the Collection of Mrs. Charles B. Cochran.)

Heath, the transformation dancer, his lithographs of Yvette Guilbert, and his paintings of the Moulin Rouge, had excited my admiration. M. Bernheim, the famous French art dealer, has told me he considers Lautrec an even finer draughtsman than Degas, and Arthur Symons has extolled his genius in words which are beyond me. Later I collected some of his best pictures for my wife.

Lautrec was very witty, and I was vastly entertained. He had a mania for recipes for mixed drinks, and learning that I had come from America he kept asking me what this and that cocktail should be made of. We agreed to dine at the grill room leading out of the café, and I remember my astonishment when I saw him get up out of his seat. He had very short legs, owing, I believe, to an accident as a child, and that made him a dwarf. His body was of normal size.

Lautrec died in September 1901, in his thirty-eighth year. He belonged to one of the noblest families of France. His father was a great sportsman, and one of Lautrec's biographers has said that, but for his deformity, France would have lost a great painter, because the son of Le Comte Alphonse de Toulouse Lautrec would assuredly have become engrossed in the sports of his ancestors—hunting, shooting, and the other hereditary pursuits of a French nobleman.

Lautrec is best known by his studies of the music-hall and the café; but, like Degas, he applied his art to the representation of horses and dogs, and did some remarkable drawings of racing cyclists. His last published work is a portfolio of circus incidents, lithographed on stone, done from memory while he was in the Maison de Sante, to which he retired shortly before his death.

One day Ranger Gull and myself were in the Café Royal discussing ways and means. When I had written my "Too Much Frohman" article, Gull had replied with a defence of Frohman. I may add that I supplied him with

the material. Really I considered Frohman a fine fellow; but Gull and myself were desperately hard up. Now we talked over another scheme. John Kensit was causing a stir with his "No Popery" campaign. Gull was to write an article against Kensit; when it was published I was to submit to Kensit a reply—which Gull would also write.

The attack, a brilliant slashing piece of work, was published, and I duly called on Kensit in Paternoster Row and offered the answering article, which I read with all the dramatic force I could muster. Kensit was vastly pleased with the article. I asked him £50 for it. He gasped at the price; but he badly wanted the manuscript. Gull was waiting in the Bodega near by. We cashed the cheque and divided it. It was a fortune to us at the moment.

About this time I went to Paris with a friend, and saw *Cyrano de Bergerac* played by Coquelin. I cabled Richard Mansfield that here was a rôle for him. He did not reply, and I never knew whether or not it was my cable that influenced him to acquire the rights of Rostand's masterpiece. But, some time after this, he came to England when Coquelin was playing *Cyrano* at the Lyceum Theatre.

I did not know Mansfield was in London until his brother Felix met me in Romano's Bar. He had been searching London for me, he said. Richard was annoyed because he couldn't find me. I gave him my address, and received an invitation to dine with Mansfield at the Savoy. With him I met Randegger, the famous operatic *maestro*, an old friend of Mansfield's, and of his mother. After Randegger left, Mansfield asked me to return with him to America. He was intensely pleased with the article I had written about him in *St. Paul's*, and gave me a cheque for it. He said he was going to do *Cyrano*, and I would have to take over a lot of costumes he had bought from Irving. Mr. Alias was to renovate them. And, of course, I leapt at the idea of returning to America, because, frankly, my attempt to establish myself in London had been a failure;

and although I had met many interesting people, and enjoyed good times spasmodically, I had suffered periods of actual starvation. I had even walked about the streets on more nights than one without a bed. I had many friends, but was too ashamed to tell them the true state of my affairs.

So, again, at the crucial moment good fortune rescued me.

I took with me a declaration for the New York Customs authorities that the costumes and boots I brought for *Cyrano* were second-hand, were to be used for dramatic representations, and taken out of the country in six months' time. But Alias had done his work of renovation so well that the clothes looked brand new ; even the soles of the boots appeared quite new. I swore they were second-hand, but was considered to have no proof to substantiate my statement. So for me it was detention at the Customs until I could get a bond. Mansfield was telephoned for, but was in the country. It was August, broiling hot weather, and most of the theatrical people were away. All that day I had to kick my heels in the Customs, and looked like passing the night there, when Al Hayman, a partner of the firm of Frohman, came along and stood for the bond that released me.

The interest when Richard Mansfield produced *Cyrano* was intense. Columns about the Coquelin production had been cabled to New York. Then it became known that the copyright had not been protected in U.S.A., and that anybody could do it. Mansfield had entered into a contract through Miss Elizabeth Marbury—then, as now, a very active play agent—to pay royalties to Rostand.

Even though the copyrights might be defective, Mansfield thought that this alone would protect him from opposition from first-class managers. But no, apart from numerous versions, billed by stock companies and minor managements, Augustin Daly announced *Cyrano* with Ada Rehan as Roxane. Mansfield opened at the Garden Theatre, New York, on 3rd October 1898. Daly's version

was given in Philadelphia on the same night. The Daly play was a fiasco, and the Mansfield production a triumph.

The Daly incident stimulated excitement, and gave *Cyrano* enormous publicity. The Rostand play was played in German by the German Company. Henry Lee, who had brought *The Henrietta* to London, and done a protean act on the Halls, played *Cyrano* in the cheaper-priced theatres. Henry Lee's brother, Bill Lee, is well known in London as the manager of Murray's, the Cosmopolitan, and other night clubs.

Mansfield's rehearsals of *Cyrano* were memorable. My job was to sit and assist Mansfield at the prompt table. Also I had to deal with the scenic artists and costumiers. At first a suitable Roxane could not be found. A well-known actress was engaged ; but she did not turn up. Then an actress engaged for a very small part was given the chance ; it proved, indeed, a chance for her, for afterwards she became a very well-known actress. It was MARGARET ANGLIN. Several times she said she couldn't go on with it ; but A. M. Palmer, who had been engaged by Mansfield as his manager, by kindly encouragement made her realise what an opportunity she had. The engagement of Palmer, by the way, was a kindly action. His great position had gone, swamped by the Frohman, Klaw & Erlanger interests, and he had been ill. But Mansfield remembered the splendid old gentleman who had given him his first opportunity, and, as I have already explained, Palmer, when Mansfield began, was a great power.

Palmer appealed to Mansfield to be more patient with Miss Anglin at rehearsals. But Mansfield had his own views. This young girl must suffer before she could play a great part. He criticised severely every gesture, every intonation of the voice. Every rehearsal brought tears. Sometimes I think there would be greater actresses in England if our leading producers took example from the Mansfield method. Here the tradition is to be sparing of a young player's feelings. Miss Anglin scored a triumph

equal to that of Mansfield. She has become a very great actress. I know of few English-speaking actresses with so lovely a voice, and such intellectual charm. Like others, she has had to do cheap plays to keep the pot boiling; but at regular intervals she has given herself intellectual holidays by incursions into the realms of classic drama.

For eight weeks *Cyrano* packed the Garden Theatre. After the first night all the seats for the entire engagement were bought up, and speculators frequently got as much as 10 dollars a seat, and sometimes 20 dollars. The play could have run the whole winter in New York, but the piece was to go on tour. The arrangements had been made. The speculators preceded us, and bought up the seats directly the box office opened in the cities we were to visit. Large towns, like Columbus and Indianapolis, were played for one night only at increased prices. At Columbus the rush to secure seats resulted in a shooting affray. The box office was announced to open on the Monday a week before the visit. From the Saturday night the speculators had their envoys in the line. Hot coffee and other refreshments were brought by their friends; but they were a worn-out lot when the box-office keeper opened his window on the Monday morning. A scramble followed. Some of those who had waited thirty-six hours were pushed out of the line. A gun was let off and a man was shot; another was stabbed. The story was wired all over the United States. Cartoons appeared showing men in armour with weird weapons, stepping over piles of wounded in order to buy seats to see Mansfield. At Indianapolis I found Benjamin Harrison (former President of the United States) in by no means a good seat. I apologised for not being able to find him a better place, and asked him why he hadn't written to tell me he wanted to be present. But the ex-President said he was quite satisfied, although his own cook had a splendid seat in the second row. He told me he had sent a coloured servant to wait in line when the box office opened; but the man had been bribed to give up his place. It was in Indiana-

polis that I heard of three commercial travellers who, unable to secure three seats, bought an odd one and shared it—each seeing one act.

The amazing success of Mansfield's *Cyrano* permitted him to regard with equanimity the versions of Rostand's play which, without payment of author's fees, were being given all over the country. At last, however, in Chicago, a legal claim on behalf of a Mr. Charles E. Gross, a real estate dealer, was put in for royalties for every performance given by Mansfield. Gross claimed that *Cyrano* was stolen from a play he had written, which was entitled *The Merchant Prince of Corneville.* The matter became serious. Rostand was joined with Mansfield in the suit. Cables were sent to France. Rostand, at first, treated the matter as a joke, and then became indignant. But it became no joke for Mansfield. It sounds extraordinary, but an injunction was granted and, to the best of my belief, Mansfield had to pay Gross a royalty for every performance he gave. I have forgotten the exact details, but I well remember it was an expensive matter for Mansfield. The judge was quite satisfied that Rostand had got hold of a copy of the real estate dealer's play, and, realising that it was a good thing, had turned it to his own advantage. "We know Mr. Gross as a highly respected citizen," said Counsel; "but what do we know of this young fellow Rostand?"

This case taught me another thing—never to be too polite to authors when rejecting their plays. Some years before Gross had sent a copy of his play, beautifully printed and bound, to A. M. Palmer. The play was worthless, but Palmer had written what he considered the right sort of diplomatic letter to an important business man in an important city. He had said something to the effect that the play was too delicate a work of literature for the stage; but, were he allowed to keep the book, it would always have a place of honour on his library shelves. This letter was produced in court, and the inference drawn was that Palmer, artfully allowing some years to elapse, had taken Gross's precious book to Paris, found the young unknown

poet Rostand, got him to put fresh touches to it, and then, to cover up his tracks, had got the filched play produced in Paris before bringing it to Mansfield. The story sounds unbelievable, but it is absolutely true. The incident caused Mansfield so much embarrassment that he seriously contemplated retiring from the stage. His sensibilities were hurt particularly, because for many years Chicago had afforded him its real meed of appreciation. When things were not good in other cities, he would look forward to his season in Chicago, knowing that it would recoup him financially, and solace the artistic side of him by the enthusiasm of its audiences and the warm appreciation of its press. The Chicago newspapers have always made a feature of dramatic criticism. They employ the best writers, and give great help to theatrical enterprise. Every Chicagoan is a theatre-goer, and I think this is largely because of the stimulus to the theatre given by the press.

I myself have a great affection for Chicago. To me it is the representative American city. I knew it well before W. T. Stead stirred things up with his *If Christ came to Chicago*, and more than ever in recent years I have visited its outstanding places of interest, from the Bucket of Blood to the magnificent Blackstone and Drake Hotels, from Ike Bloom's night resort (where the Two Bobs originated) to its amazing picture theatres and dance resorts. At one dance place it was possible for the proprietor to pay Paul Whiteman's band 5000 dollars for one night, and still make a big profit.

CHAPTER X

Trouble with the Ticket Speculators—Interesting Suppers on Mansfield's Railway Car—I meet Irving, Sarah Bernhardt, Mrs. Langtry, Ex-President M'Kinley, and other Celebrities—Mansfield sends me to England to find Plays—Miss Ellaline Terris helps me during a Serious Illness—Luncheon at Haslemere with Bernard Shaw—Shaw goes Hungry—Disappointing Old English Hotels—Miss Evelyn Laye's Father my Stage Manager in a Touring Company—Arthur Binstead's Brother.

THE triumphant progress of the Mansfield tour of *Cyrano de Bergerac* put the entire company in high spirits. The arrival of our complete train, which carried one hundred and four people, and truckloads of scenery and accessories, was an event everywhere we visited. Always there was the same tale of the house sold out before we arrived, and in every town there was a protest against the exorbitant prices charged by the speculators, and the system which made them possible.

But it was not until we were due at Pittsburg, late in the tour, that the local press urged the public not to buy advance tickets at a price beyond that charged at the box office. The campaign influenced the public, and we found when we arrived that the speculators were stuck with huge blocks of seats. This reacted on us, because the speculators, finding they could not get the increased prices they wanted, determined to cut their losses by offering their seats, which were the best seats, at box-office prices, making it impossible for us to sell the back rows. They came to this decision so late, and so many people were averse from buying from speculators, that towards the late afternoon of the day of our first performance they started selling their seats at less than box-office prices They waylaid people who were

entering the theatre, and became a general nuisance. The incident was annoying to Mansfield. Moreover, one or two of the local papers were not above making vague hints that Mansfield was sharing profits with the speculators; this, of course, was entirely without foundation in fact.

The manager of the theatre was a quaint character named Davis, generally known as Alvin Joslin; he had made all his money and built his theatre from a crude play with that title; it was a "Rube" drama, with a hayseed farmer in the title-rôle character. Davis played in the small towns only, which he paraded in the daytime with a brass band made up of the actors. In those days there were many such travelling companies, and it was common to see in the advertisements of the *Clipper* and other theatrical journals: "Wanted a leading man and low comedian, who can double in brass." One recalls that story of the Benson Company advertisement: "Wanted a Polonius who can keep goal." Davis, when on tour, would exhibit his diamonds in a principal shop in the main street. Once Lew Dockstaders' Minstrels were showing in the same town as "Alvin Joslin," and Dockstader, as a counter-attraction, exhibited three lumps of coal in a shop window, advertising them as Lew Dockstader's black diamonds.

Well, after reporting what the ticket speculators were doing to Mansfield, I went to Davis and told him that some way out must be found. Davis got the police to assist him, and had the ticket speculators continually moved on so that they would not get hold of the people who were coming to the theatre to buy tickets. We also posted our own scouts outside the theatre and its approaches to warn people that the tickets bought from speculators were not genuine. This was not a true tale, but we felt the expedient was justified. The final result was that the speculators were landed with whole blocks of unsold seats.

To get even with us, they gave away the tickets to the most disreputable-looking tramps they could find, and went so far as to give away two of the boxes to down-at-heel negroes. I stood at the ticket entrance when the negroes

presented their box tickets, and took it upon myself to tell the ticket-taker to refuse them admission. Davis confirmed my action, although he told me he felt trouble would follow. But I knew that if the curtain went up, and Mansfield saw negroes in the box, he would probably have the curtain rung down.

As Davis anticipated, there was trouble. The next day we were served with writs for violation of the Act which gives the negro certain equal rights with the white man. Legally, I found negroes were allowed in all public places in the Northern States, but, in point of fact, they were rigorously excluded from first-class restaurants, bars, and the best places in the theatres. As they seldom tried to force themselves where they were not wanted, the Act was not often quoted; when they did, all sorts of dodges were resorted to. For instance, a dollar would be charged for a cocktail which was sold to a white customer for a quarter, and I have seen the bartender ostentatiously break the glass immediately after the negro had finished his drink.

Davis, A. M. Palmer, Dillon, the ticket-taker, and myself were brought before a magistrate for an inquiry. Davis put up a bond, and before the case was heard again we were out of the town. I do not remember what the ultimate result was, but I believe it cost money.

On this tour I was nearly always with Mansfield. He never visited or received visitors during the daytime when he was playing an arduous rôle. He would rise late, have his breakfast, at which meal I would call, bringing in important letters, and see if there was anything he wanted me to do. Then, generally, if the day was fine, he would go for a walk, taking me with him, for two or three hours, returning home to read and rest, with a very light meal before the performance. After the play he loved to entertain his friends at supper-parties on his car, or in his hotel if he were not living in the car. I have supped on the car with Irving, with Mrs. Langtry, with Sarah Bernhardt, Rosina Brandram, ex-President Harrison, ex-President

M'Kinley, William Winter, and many other famous people.

But Mansfield by now had so large an entourage of business managers that there was little for me to do; he seemed disinclined that I should do anything but be his companion. If business matters cropped up he would almost invariably tell me not to worry about them, but to turn them over to Palmer or Dillon or Graham. My occupation was extremely pleasant, but I felt that it was leading me nowhere. Also, although the supper-parties were always interesting, I had no opportunity of going out with my own friends.

I told Mansfield what was in my mind, and said that I wanted to be a manager; and one night he promised if I could find a suitable play he would finance it, and get me bookings in conjunction with his own, and let me have complete control. I had seen a farce called *My Soldier Boy*, which Weedon Grossmith had played in London at the Criterion. Its author, one of the Lindos, brother of Richard Lindo, for so many years at Drury Lane, was in New York. I got a copy of the play from him and read it to Mansfield, and he arranged that I should go to England, if possible secure Weedon Grossmith, and, if not, some lesser known actor of his type.

A. M. Palmer was envious, but good-naturedly so, of my promised visit to England, so Mansfield arranged that he should accompany me, and that, in addition to making contracts for *My Soldier Boy*, we should see Shaw, Pinero, Grundy, and other dramatists in regard to plays for our staff.

Just before I sailed I introduced a charming young member of the Mansfield company, Maisie Blythe, to Arnold Daly, a promising young actor. Daly started to act about the same time as myself, and had made a success as the boy in Mark Twain's *Pudd'n-Head Wilson*. Before that he had been in Charles Frohman's office in the daytime, and had dressed John Drew at night. I mention all this because indirectly it furthered the presentation of Shaw

plays in New York. I had given Maisie Blythe the *Plays Pleasant and Unpleasant* of Shaw, as a Christmas present, and when she and Daly got married she made him interested in Shaw's plays, and he blossomed out as an actor-manager with a Bernard Shaw repertoire. He had one season at the Criterion in London in *Arms and the Man.*

Later, Mrs. Daly divorced him, and she is now Mrs. Frank Craven. Her husband can claim to have written one of the most representative of American comedies, *The First Year,* in which he gave a delightful performance. He was successful in London in *Ready Money* ; but when he did *Too Many Cooks,* at the Savoy, the play misfired.

I enjoyed being in London with Palmer, because he was well known, and thought a lot of by the leading managers and actors. I supped at the Garrick Club for the first time when I was with him, and another night we saw *A Runaway Girl* at the Old Gaiety, and I was introduced to Miss Ellaline Terriss, who, twenty years later, did more to help me to recover from the only serious illness I have ever had than the well-known physicians who attended me.

We had meetings with Sydney Grundy, Pinero, and George Bernard Shaw. We lunched with Shaw at Haslemere. Although he was a vegetarian he had a leg of lamb cooked for us. Palmer was on a diet, and didn't eat meat. Shaw's vegetable dishes were tempting, and Palmer ate heartily of them. They were, of course, really prepared for Shaw, and at the end of the lunch he admitted that Palmer's inroad upon his rations had kept him hungry. We discussed *Cæsar and Cleopatra,* and Shaw professed to be annoyed at Mansfield's lack of appreciation of this play as a medium for him.

Palmer and I went to Greenwich to eat white bait at the Old Ship. We explored the London of Dickens. I think it was about this time that I got to know more about London than at any other time. We went to Oxford, Cambridge, and to several of the industrial towns to see

ZOLA, BY AUBREY BEARDSLEY

The Original Drawing in Mrs. Cochran's Collection.

actors of whom we had heard good reports. The country hotels of England were known to me, except for one or two nights spent as a small boy with my father, principally through the pages of Dickens. To dine in one of these hotels seemed to me something to look forward to. I was grievously disappointed. The English good cheer, the welcome of the host, the sideboard groaning with honest English fare—there were none of these. I was disgusted with the hot water disguised as soup by means of powders from a packet, the flounders dignified by the name of sole, the tinned fruit, and the pallid blanc-mange. How often in America had I boasted of the solid comfort and liberal fare of the English hotel! I expected roaring fires in huge grates; but instead shivered in hideously furnished rooms, with a meagre apology of a fire or a gas-stove.

Then suddenly there came another swift change. Mansfield cabled me to abandon the idea of *My Soldier Boy*, and to return to my job.

I was terribly chagrined; I thought it all out, and determined to have another try for a footing in London. I met an old gentleman named Eaton Edevain, who ran a more or less disreputable weekly which had a bright yellow cover, and was called *Society*. I gathered that its chief revenue came from the advertisements of massage establishments; that its leading literary feature was a scandalous serial entitled "The Confessions of Nemesis Hunt." The author of this serial was my old friend, Reggie Bacchus; it was at his house that I met Edevain. Edevain's son was a well-known baritone, Templer Saxe, who was touring the provinces with the comic opera *Paul Jones*, in which Agnes Huntingdon had made so big a success in London some years earlier. The old man invited me to take over the management of his touring company. I accepted the offer, and the enterprise was moderately successful. The stage manager of the company was Gilbert Laye, father of Miss Evelyn Laye, who has been doing so well at Daly's, and who played for me in two shows at the London Pavilion, where she met young Sonnie

Hale, Robert Hale's son, who was making a start in the chorus. Sonnie Hale and Miss Laye are, I believe, engaged to be married.

At the end of this tour Templer Saxe thought he would like to try the music-halls, and I secured him engagements. My success with him resulted in other performers coming to me, and in quite a short time I had become an established theatre and music-hall agent. I had chambers in Chancery Lane, and converted them into offices. My clerk was a one-time very famous comic singer, Arthur Corney—one of the very best of the old red-nosed type of comedian. He was a brother of that genius Arthur Binstead, the Tale Pitcher of the *Pink 'Un*. When Corney sang, "It's Another Colour Now" and "Gently does the Trick" all London whistled the refrains. Corney, indeed, would have become an established favourite of the music-halls, but drink made him unreliable. Then he lost his nerve, and couldn't face an audience. It was a tragedy, because he had the ball at his feet. Corney had begun life as a lawyer's clerk, and he wrote a wonderfully legible hand. For a little while he was splendid as my clerk, but after a time he became impossible, and, though I had great affection for him, I had to dismiss him. When he had money he could not resist the temptation of taking too much drink. To save him from starving I arranged to pay him a small sum daily, for which he was to turn in to me two lyrics a week. This answered admirably, as what I gave him sufficed for his actual necessities, and he hadn't enough left over for alcoholic indulgence. Besides which he wrote excellent songs.

One Saturday night, before a Bank Holiday, he asked me to pay him up to Bank Holiday inclusive. I did so. He got blind drunk, was knocked down by a vehicle in the Lambeth Road, and died.

Poor Corney had much of the brilliance of his brother, Arthur Binstead, and some of the verses which I sold to Edevain's *Society* would have made the fame of many a writer. Perhaps some of his best verses were unprint-

able; but they were shown around town, and revealed a clever humorous mind. I remember once meeting him in the bar of the Middlesex Music-Hall. "My Muse," he said, "has at last been put to the basest possible use—to supply me with food and drink, and to enable me to escape the fate of Chatterton. I have been commissioned to do weekly a set of verses eulogising the winkles of a worthy Drury Lane vendor of this succulent relish to one's tea. The verses are to be printed on his bags."

CHAPTER XI

Houdini, the Handcuff King—His Uncanny Sense of Showmanship—Booking his Brother in Opposition to Himself—That Celebrated Character, Hugh J. Didcott, a one-time Music-Hall Dictator—The Bowls for Gold and Silver on his Office Desk—How Didcott discovered Bessie Bellwood—Edward Laurillard's Early Days—Didcott's Fall—His Speaking Tubes that impressed Callers.

NOW, let me tell of some of the turns I booked as an agent. I suppose one of the most remarkable was Houdini, the Handcuff King.

He opened at the Alhambra, and created a good deal of interest, but it was when I induced Mr. Frank Monaghten to take him to the provinces that he got full scope for his remarkable powers of showmanship. He became the talk of every town he visited, and was an enormous box-office attraction. How he contrived all the wonderful things which worked up the excitement I never knew. If he squared the local police, it was so brilliantly done that it was never divulged. He would permit himself to be stripped, and locked up in a cell, and his clothes put in an adjoining locked cell. He would escape, get his clothes, and walk out of jail.

In Germany he contested the police ban when they attempted to stop him from stating on the stage that he would extricate himself from any of the regulation police handcuffs. A judge said that such a statement could easily be tested, so Houdini was handcuffed carefully by the German police. He seemed to have no difficulty in releasing himself. He offered the police a further test, which they accepted. He was put in a Black Maria, handcuffed. Again he released himself. After this success the case was decided in his favour.

I remember once arriving in Bremen on a business trip, and found the town in a state of excitement, because it had been announced that Houdini was to be thrown from a bridge into the river below, handcuffed, and tied up in a sealed sack. I saw the exhibition. When the sack disappeared under the water it was as tense a thrill as ever I experienced. It seemed many minutes before Houdini came to the surface; but he did come up, quite free, and swam to the bank.

Certainly Houdini was one of the most remarkable showmen I have ever known. He was great also as a conjurer, and as a card manipulator at close range I have never known him equalled. Even Max Malini, Horace Goldin and other wonderful experts are only too ready to acknowledge Houdini's supremacy. In some ways Houdini's sense of showmanship was almost uncanny. To ward off imitations of his acts he arranged that his brother, Hardeen, should be booked at another Hall in opposition to himself. He taught Hardeen just as much as he thought he ought to know—not enough to interfere with the value of his own act, but a little more than his rivals had learned. As his rivals learned a bit more, he taught his brother just a little more again.

It was through Hardeen that I came in contact with one of the most celebrated characters of the Victorian music-halls—the late Hugh J. Didcott. At one time Hugh J. Didcott was an absolute dictator. All the stars were under his control, and their increase of salary was entirely due to him. Under the name of Hubert Maurice —his real name was Josephs—he had been a ballad singer. Once, too, he had played *Macbeth* at Drury Lane. At this time I believe he had money, and financed the venture. Then he decided that to be an agent rather than a performer was the paying game. He decided to take the name of Didcott when he was passing through the station of that name on a journey from the North. Albert Chevalier made his music-hall début under the guidance of Didcott, and later

became his partner in the Trocadero, when it was a music-hall.

At the height of his fame Didcott was a very showy figure in the London restaurants, particularly at Romano's, where he entertained nightly on a lavish scale, always with an elegant carriage and pair waiting for him. In those days, he once told me, he would be disappointed if he did not take £200 in commission from artists every Monday morning. He would sit at a desk with two large bowls in front of him, one to receive gold, the other silver. The great Macdermott, Charles Godfrey, Jennie Hill, Bessie Bellwood—all the big stars of the day—were booked by Didcott. He told me that he discovered Bessie Bellwood at a sing-song in the New Cut, where she worked by day as a rabbit-skinner. I saw her on the stage only once. She sang "What'cher 'Ria." She is imprinted on my memory as one of the most electric personalities I have known among performers. She was not the finished artist that Marie Lloyd became; she was all personality, natural and spontaneous.

But at the time I met Didcott his glory had passed. He had then an office in the Haymarket. Edward Laurillard also had an office in the same building; I believe that he was selling a patent medicine. Didcott had been brought low because of an action which he brought against Frank Boyd of the *Pelican*—an action which he lost. Under cross-examination a lurid light was thrown on Didcott's past. Whether or not this had anything to do with his being barred from the Syndicate Halls—which undoubtedly he had helped largely to make—I do not know, but certainly he was barred.

This action followed on a relentless campaign against Didcott and his association with the Oxford, Tivoli, and Pavilion, which was carried out by Augustus Moore, brother of George Moore, the novelist, in a paper called the *Hawk*. Didcott was practically ruined, and for some time was out of business. When I met him he had started again in the Haymarket, and had, as financial partner, that sound and

popular man, Billie Dawes, for many years acting-manager at the Gaiety, and now at the Palace Theatre. The Syndicate Halls had opened their doors again to Didcott; but he was no longer in a position to dictate to the directors as he once did. Formerly they came almost hat in hand, begging for such turns as he would allow to appear. Now they accepted from him such turns as they wanted.

I had seen Didcott in his great days driving a dogcart, or walking on the front at Brighton, with the principal boy of the pantomime, when I was a youngster on my Christmas holidays. I had been told of his great power, how he created and controlled the destinies of music-hall stars. Later I had read the *Pelican* case, and was tremendously interested and impressed as well. So, perhaps, I was just a little scared of Didcott when I came to meet him. Many people said the most appalling things about him. All I can say is he was very kind to me.

I had no business transaction with him; but I often lunched or dined with him, and at night we sometimes visited the Halls together. I found him a kind and generous friend. When he was in funds he was lavishly hospitable. Poor Didcott! In his latest days, when he left the Haymarket and went to John Street, Adelphi, he was sometimes very hard up indeed.

In his Haymarket office he saw to it that callers, particularly small music-hall artists, should be impressed that he was still a man of power and position. He had an array of bells and speaking tubes, labelled with such names as "Mr. Brown, Continental Manager," "Mr. Smith, Provincial Manager," "Mr. Mouncey, Cashier," etc. etc. All these bells and speaking tubes communicated with the office boy!

Sometimes, when Didcott was talking to a visitor, he would ring through to the "Continental Representative" and say carelessly, "Not there! Oh, I forgot, he went to Paris yesterday with George Edwardes. Yes, yes, I'm sorry!" Then he would resume his business conversation, and the carefully instructed boy in the outer office might

blow through, " Miss Marie Lloyd to see you, sir." " Tell Miss Lloyd to wait," Didcott would reply.

Didcott had two daughters, both of whom did well on the stage, and both married well. In his last illness he was looked after by his relatives and placed in one of the best nursing homes in London, where every care was bestowed upon him.

Harry Hibbert, who has written affectionately of " Didlicott," as Marie Lloyd called him, in his *Fifty Years of a Londoner's Life*, Gus Moore, who previously had so bitterly attacked him, my wife and myself, and some of his own relatives, constantly saw him in these last days. A year or so before his death he had persuaded me to induce a certain variety agent to lend him a sum of money. At the time of his illness this had not been repaid, but two days before he died he took from under his pillow a bundle of notes, and from it handed me the amount due to the agent, and said, " Pay him. I don't want you to be worried by him for what I owe after my death. It's all up," he told me. " This is my farewell."

Didcott was, I am sure, very fond of me, and believed in my future. He told Adney Payne, Henry Tozer, and other music-hall magnates that I had the greatest *flair* for knowing talent in the raw of anybody in the business, and this commendation was a help in my struggling days as an agent, because although the heads of the music-hall profession were a bit shy of doing business with the old man, they understood that " he knew."

A strange friendship, perhaps, but one that in some ways I miss more than any in my career. Didcott greatly admired my wife, who saw him once after my last visit. He was happy that she should be almost his last visitor.

CHAPTER XII

How I met my Wife—I follow to Dublin—An Elopement with Marriage by Special Licence—Harry Lauder's First London Appearance—The Luck of Charles Morton and the Palace Theatre—Credit for "Turns" that he had turned down—A Revue by Mostyn Pigott and Herman Finck—The Thoroughness of Alfred Butt—Herman Finck's Natural Wit—When Albert Gilmer was flabbergasted.

TO those who know my wife, it will come as a surprise to learn that I met her coming out of an inn; she prefers this word to "public-house"—which I fear it was.

I had been asked to dine at Bedford Park and, turning to the right from Turnham Green Station, I passed The Tabard, which was then—and I think is now—the only licensed house in Bedford Park. It had been designed by the Carrs—relatives, I believe, of Comyns Carr—in accord with the general scheme of architecture for this settlement of actors and artists, and its exterior was certainly picturesque. It calls to mind the inns painted by Cecil Aldin, who, as it happened, used to be one of Bedford Park's notable residents.

Out from The Tabard came Ranger Gull and a pretty girl, who carried a bundle of books. That I should meet Gull in this way did not surprise me; but I was astounded to note his companion who, obviously, was not more than sixteen years of age. He introduced me. Her name was Miss Evelyn Dade. He explained that as Miss Dade had wondered what the fascination might be of the place which so many of the men of the suburb visited, he had dared her to go in; and she had gone in. Miss Dade was embarrassed at meeting a stranger in such circumstances; but we talked and laughed and walked together to her home.

Ranger Gull knew her mother well; but I was surprised,

when he said good-bye, to hear him in a chaffing way promise to return late at night and throw a pebble against Miss Dade's window. I thought Miss Dade very charming indeed. I thought of her all the evening.

Gull that night was at a dinner-party at the house of Reggie Bacchus. I, too, had been invited. Bacchus had married Isa Bowman, one of several sisters who were famous stage children. Isa had been principal girl in the pantomime at Drury Lane in succession to Marie Lloyd, and she was at this time, or just previously, a charming leading lady for Arthur Roberts who, then in his prime, was playing in a musical comedy called *Dandy Dan, the Lifeguardsman.* Another guest was Leonard Smithers, Beardsley's publisher. Smithers was a fat Yorkshireman, and did not look at all like the man you would expect to be publishing those beautiful editions which he issued from his splendid offices in the Royal Arcade, off Bond Street. In his latter days, just before he came to an appalling end, he did his publishing in Clement's Inn. The beautiful Gaiety dancer, Alice Lethbridge, was also of the party. It was a merry affair.

Ranger Gull succumbed to an over-generous consumption of whiskies-and-sodas after the wines that were served with the dinner. I saw him fast asleep on the sofa, and thought of his romantic appointment. I would deputise for him. I did so.

It was about four years after this that I married Evelyn Dade, the girl I had met that night with Gull. She lived alone with her mother, who did not approve of our acquaintanceship. I remember she told her daughter that she would not so much mind her having a friendship with a "man about town," but that I gave her the impression of being a "man about many towns."

I must mention, too, that some people detected a resemblance between me and Arthur Roberts, according to the photographs of him published at that time. Miss Dade made quite a collection of these portraits. She cut them from newspapers, and plastered her bedroom walls

Mrs. Charles B. Cochran

with them. This so angered her mother that she destroyed the photographs. The result was a painful scene between mother and daughter; and that brought about a family council to which two uncles were called.

It was decided that Miss Dade should leave London. Her uncle was taking up a new post in Dublin, and there she was hurried. So closely was she guarded that she found it difficult to let me know what had happened. Then she managed to get a letter to me through an Irish servant. She was to be sent to a convent in the south of Ireland in about a week's time. She begged me to come to Dublin to take her away.

She told me to await her at an arranged time in a certain confectioner's. I met her and learned that she was bound for the convent the following day. Her uncle would see her off at the station. I said that I would be on the same train. We would get out at the first stop, return to Dublin, and then go back to England.

When I arrived at the station I saw my future wife leaning out of the window talking to a gentleman in plus fours and a cap—her uncle.

Neither of us gave a sign of recognition. I was not known by sight to her uncle. I got into an adjoining compartment.

I heard my wife tell her uncle she was sure he did not want to wait; and nearly ten minutes before the train left he kissed her good-bye, and we watched him as he left the station. After making certain that he really had gone we left the train, got the luggage out of the van, and took a cab to the harbour, from where the boats went for England. We booked our passage, and lay low all day until the boat left.

I had arranged for a special licence; and we were married soon after our arrival at the register office in Henrietta Street, Covent Garden, where recently my wife and I acted as witnesses for Captain Herbert Buckmaster and his wife, formerly Miss Nellie Taylor, the delightful musical comedy actress, who played her last three engage-

ments with me. I had arranged for Augustus Moore and Ernest Baker, of the Baker family, who at that time owned a number of London hotels, to be our witnesses. Moore came along, but Baker did not, and we had to dig up a second witness at the register office.

I'm afraid we had no honeymoon holiday; and a bottle of champagne and some biscuits with Moore at the near-by Covent Garden Hotel was our wedding breakfast. And I remember distinctly leaving my wife with Gus Moore while I went to keep an appointment with Mr. J. L. Graydon, the proprietor of the Middlesex Music-Hall in Drury Lane, which in late years has become the Winter Garden Theatre. Let me add that my mother-in-law became reconciled to our marriage, and that up to her death, which occurred in 1923, she and I were the best of friends.

Soon after we were married I met in Romano's one of our most popular boxing referees. He lived at the seaside, and he asked me to stay the week-end, and to bring Mrs. Cochran. When the three of us were getting out of the train at the seaside my referee friend said, "I hope you won't mind if my wife does not appear very pleased to see you at first. You see, I have not been home this week, and she will be rather annoyed; but don't mind, it will be all right."

My wife and I felt awkward, and wanted to go back to London; but our host wouldn't hear of that. Sure enough, when we reached his home, his wife—an American—would not speak to us. Afterwards, when she thawed, she told my wife that her husband was always bringing home "bruisers" and their wives and sweethearts; and at first she took me to be a boxer. By the end of the day Mrs. Cochran and I had made a good impression, and all seemed well.

But next day my friend spoilt everything by keeping me out with him all day. When we arrived home at night he fell out of his dogcart, and I had to help him up the front-door steps. The situation was made more difficult

because his little son kept shouting out, " Father's drunk again."

The music-halls of that time were vastly interesting to me, and I generally visited two or three a night. I found it was easier for me to do business with the Halls in my capacity as agent than with the theatres.

I remember Harry Lauder making his début in London. An agent named Munroe, the husband of one of the sisters Don, told me to go to Gatti's in the Road (there were two Gatti's—one in Westminster Bridge Road known as " in the Road," and one in Villiers Street, under Charing Cross Station railway arch, which was known as " Gatti's in the Arches ") and see a new Scottish comedian who was going to knock London cold.

He was right. Lauder proved a sensation at his very first appearance. Failure had been predicted by many of the experts because another Scottish comedian, very popular in Scotland, W. F. Frame, had previously been a failure in London. But Lauder got the London audiences at the very start. He was soon working three or more Halls a night. He became particularly popular at the London Pavilion, and at the end of his first set of contracts it was proposed by his agent, George Foster, that the Pavilion should have an exclusive engagement so far as the West End was concerned—that is to say, Lauder was not to appear at the Tivoli, Oxford, or any other West End theatre within a mile radius of the Pavilion ; his only other engagements would be in the outlying Halls. The arrangement was to cover a number of years.

Lauder wanted, I believe, £50 a week. The Pavilion directors would not offer more than £25, and the proposal fell through. So after this Lauder appeared at the Oxford and Tivoli, and was barred at the Pavilion.

I was in the London Pavilion when Hugh Astley, the chairman of the Pavilion Company, brother of the famous Sir John, and Frank Glenister decided that Lauder's demands were exorbitant. Astley told me the circumstances himself, saying, " I don't know what the business

is coming to with the high salaries the artists are asking." Had Lauder been snapped up by the Pavilion directorate it would have had an enormous influence on the future of that theatre. When the Pavilion had Dan Leno exclusively it did nothing but capacity business. Lauder, I should say, is the only performer who has ever equalled the outstanding popularity of that wonderful droll. In later times he probably surpassed the drawing powers of Leno.

I did business as an agent with old Charles Morton at the Palace Theatre. Hugh J. Didcott used to tell me that this celebrated manager, with the famous white mutton-chop whiskers, was the luckiest man in the entertainment world. Never through his own efforts had he made a success of any place he had managed—this despite the fact that the Palace at that time was probably the most successful music-hall in Europe.

Built as an English opera-house, the Palace had been converted into a music-hall by Sir Augustus Harris. But the audiences did not come. Then Charles Morton was engaged as manager.

Just before his arrival, the directors took a step which had about it the boldness of despair. Kilanyi's Living Pictures were booked. In those Victorian times such an entertainment was looked upon as saucy, even salacious. There was a possibility that the licensing authorities might object to the pictures, because of the revelation of the feminine form. It was a make-or-break policy. Mr. Morton opposed the engagement, and did his utmost to cancel it. He failed. The pictures made a sensational success. For the first time all London went to the Palace. And, as so often happens in such circumstances, it was Morton whom the public credited with the engagement.

Before Mr. Morton went to the Palace he had been at the Tivoli in the Strand ; and it is true also that this Hall was not successful until he left.

When one thinks of it, nearly all the subsequent successes at the Palace during its music-hall period had,

like the living pictures, a definite sex appeal. True, there were comic turns which proved popular; all the same it was femininity that accounted for the box-office receipts. One recalls the triumph of Anna Held singing, "Won't you come and play with me?" with Ritchie, the tramp cyclist, doing by-play that accentuated the double meaning of the words. Then there was Gaby Deslys in the first of the bedroom sketches; and Maud Allan, whose dances the London public decided were respectable after Mr. Asquith had had tea with Miss Allan. Then came Pavlova; and, after all, though in all first-class ballet-dancing there is a sort of impersonal sexlessness, yet the Russian Ballet did undoubtedly have a certain sensuous atmosphere.

It was not unnatural that a man of Mr. Morton's age —he was over eighty—should be influenced by the past. Because of this I was once able to make a long engagement for an indifferent artist. She came to me with a letter of introduction from America, and a scrap-book full of eulogistic notices. She was not pretty, her voice was not good, and she sang a dull medley of old songs that included "Dixie," "Poor Old Joe," and "Marching through Georgia." I secured her a hearing at one of the Monday morning auditions. She seemed to me so bad that, knowing Mr. Morton could be most testy when a poor turn was offered him, I tried to leave the theatre unostentatiously before the performance was ended.

I had got near the door when the old man called out, "That's enough!" and asked, "Who brought this young lady here, Ettinson?" Ettinson, the stage-manager, was a brother of Peggy Bettinson, of the National Sporting Club. So I had to face Mr. Morton, and expected a reprimand. I was surprised, therefore, when he said graciously, "That's a good turn, Cochran. I love the old songs. My old friend, Mackney, used to sing 'Poor Old Joe.' She can open to-night if she doesn't want too much. Not that she isn't worth a good salary, but the programme's very full; perhaps you can get her to take £25 a week."

At first I thought Mr. Morton was being sarcastic. I would not have dared to ask £8 a week for the lady; but I saw that he was serious, and ventured to say, "She might accept the money you offer, Mr. Morton, if you give her a long engagement."

"Certainly," he replied; "she can have six months as a trial." Then calling Ettinson, he said, "This young lady goes on to-night."

Ettinson also seemed surprised, and said, "Shall I put her first turn or second turn, Mr. Morton?"

The old man turned on Ettinson and asked him if he was crazy. "Find a nice spot about half-past nine or a quarter to ten," he said.

And that young lady went on about that time in the programme at the Palace for nearly two years. She used to clear the stalls during her number, and greatly increased the trade at the bars. But old Mr. Morton used to sit in his usual place at the back of the stalls, drinking a cup of tea and beating time to the melodies, hitting his teaspoon against the saucer. Count Hollender and Eugène Cremetti, who were directors of the Palace, always timed their visits for her turn to have passed when they arrived.

I nearly became the first producer of revue at the Palace Theatre. Frequently I tried to convince Mr. Morton that a forty minutes' revue was what was wanted. Finally, I got him so interested that I commissioned Mostyn Pigott to do the book and Herman Finck the music. When the revue was completed, Pigott read the book to Morton, and Finck played over some of the tunes. Morton declared that the book was worthy of Gilbert, and indeed I am not sure but what it was the best English revue ever written. Arrangements were discussed for production, and the cast suggested included Miss Marie Dainton, Miss Millie Legarde, Mr. Robb Harwood, and Mr. Farren Soutar. Terms were settled, and the engagement was to be ratified at the next Board Meeting. But the project fell through because the directors were afraid of litigation. Music-halls at that time were not permitted to give stage plays—short sketches

had been winked at; but the Palace directors feared that a forty minutes' production would bring down upon them the serious displeasure of the licensing authorities, and probably curtail privileges which, although not legal, they had for so long been able to make use of.

I met Alfred Butt at the Palace soon after he took up his appointment as secretary of the company. I had just engaged—she was to appear at the Empire at a salary (an enormous one at that time) of £105 per week—Mlle. Odette Dulac, a *diseuse* who had been drawing all Paris to the Boîte à Fursy. I had offered Dulac to the Palace, but Morton would not have her. Then I made the engagement with the Empire, and I managed to get a great deal of publicity for Dulac before she arrived in London. Alfred Butt wanted to know how I had been able to do this. He also questioned me closely as to whether I thought the turn could pay at so large a salary. From the very beginning of his career Alfred Butt made it his business to find out everything he could, and to take the opinion of anybody who, he thought, might give him useful knowledge about the music-hall business.

I have mentioned Herman Finck, musical director at the Palace in its great days, and now musical director at Drury Lane. Herman Finck is a natural wit; some of his *mots* have gone round the town. There was the one about Mr. Volnay, who for many years was manager at the Palace Theatre. Mr. Volnay was very slim of build, which accounted for Finck saying one day: "Volnay—his name should be Beaune." Once, too, Finck was rehearsing a new revue with Mlle. Regine Flory as star. I remember him saying to me that the Palace was now under a new "regine."

I suppose that Albert Gilmer of the Oxford was the last of the old-style West End music-hall managers. In the 'nineties he was an exceedingly important person — he worked up the bar trade so well.

Gilmer was a big, handsome, good-hearted fellow; he had an amazing flow of florid language. Some people will

also remember his habit of alluding to himself as "Your old Albert." He held court nightly in the long bar at the Oxford. Always you found the same crowd of bookmakers, variety stars, and faithful music-hall patrons. A lot of champagne was drunk over the bar in those days. I wonder how often a bottle of champagne is opened in a music-hall bar in these times! Gilmer always had his favourite vintage and his favourite cigar.

One afternoon, during a performance in aid of the Music-Hall Benevolent Fund, Gilmer—after a good luncheon—stood at the bar with some friends. At the lower end of the bar was a music-hall manager from the East End. He was using language that must in time have turned the air blue. At last Mrs. Morgan, who had served behind the Oxford Bar for many years—and must have become accustomed to most varieties of strong talk—declared that it was more than she could stand. She asked Mr. Gilmer to tell his East End confrère to stop it.

Gilmer seized the rail of the bar, swung round, glared at the offender, and let loose: "Where the —— —— did he think he was? His sort of language might be all—well, where he—well came from. But he would like him to remember he was now in the West End and not in a—Whitechapel sewer."

Just for a moment the East End manager—an enormous man—looked overcome. Then he let forth a flow that exceeded everything that had gone before. For that afternoon, at least, Albert Gilmer was silenced, staggered by the thought that any man could know so many appallingly expressive words.

CHAPTER XIII

The Qualities of Odette Dulac, Yvette Guilbert, Marie Lloyd, Raquel Meller, and Florence Mills—Why Dulac thought English Morals droll—A Mayol Contract for the "Empire," which he did not fulfil —"The Shapeliest Legs I ever saw"—I get Music-Hall Engagements for Mrs. Brown Potter, Mabel, Countess Russell, and May Yohe—May Yohe's Jokes about her Husbands—Ethel Levey's Secret Trial —A Strange Caller—The Man about to die.

I THINK it was the way I handled Odette Dulac that first got me some reputation for being a showman.

Dulac was an exquisite *diseuse*, and had a great deal to do with making the reputation of the delightful little cabaret in the Rue Pigalle which had been opened by the Chansonnier Fursy. Appropriately it was called the Boîte à Fursy—it was indeed only a bandbox. Dulac had a charming voice, but, above all, her diction was perfect, and she could impart to a song a cynical, humorous touch of the rarest kind. I put her among the few great actresses of song. Yvette Guilbert came first—then Dulac.

Later, at the Empire, I introduced a Berlin cabaret singer—Claire Waldoff. Her talent was more limited than that of the two Frenchwomen; but in song she was the epitome of the Friedrichstrasse even as Guilbert and Dulac were the incarnation of the Boulevards. Our own Marie Lloyd was to London what these women were to Paris and Berlin. Raquel Meller, who may prove to be the greatest of them all, is more international than any of the great artists I have mentioned, although the subject-matter of her songs is mainly Spanish. Florence Mills, the negro artist I imported recently to London, epitomised the loneliness of soul of the negro race, and unconsciously excited

pity as well as commanding applause. She is the only artist I have known who at every performance got a round of applause, not only on her first entrance, but before every song she sang.

The Empire was too large a frame for Dulac. It was the same with Claire Waldoff. But both performers drew the connoisseurs, and their genius was acclaimed by the entire press. When Dulac came to the Empire Mrs. Ormiston Chant had not long ended her campaign for the purifying of the music-halls, and Mr. Hector Tennent, the managing director of the Empire, was fearful lest Dulac should sing something which might be objected to by the L.C.C. A special rehearsal was held, at which she went through the whole of her repertoire. Leopold Wenzel, the *chef d'orchestre*, a Belgian, translated the songs to Mr. Tennent, who had an imperfect knowledge of French. One song after another was objected to, but at last two were selected for Dulac's opening performance. "The Honeysuckle and the Bee" in English was a third number, and Tennent seemed particularly struck by one song which had a pretty waltz melody.

I secured a number of private engagements for Dulac at very high prices. One evening Lady Ripon, then Lady de Grey, was entertaining a number of Dominion Ministers, and she engaged Dulac. Because of her success at the entertainment Dulac was interviewed by an evening journal, and she declared she was delighted that she had not shocked the Ministers and the other important people at the gathering by singing songs which Mr. Hector Tennent thought were *not fit for the ears of the ladies who thronged the Empire promenade.* Furthermore, she expressed surprise that the pretty waltz song should have been selected by Mr. Tennent because it was the only number in her repertoire that had been censored in Paris. English morals she thought most droll.

The song in question was full of double meaning. Wenzel, a Belgian long resident in England, had apparently not fully understood the words; and, indeed, few

people in the audience had followed the song until this interview drew attention to it.

But the belief that Dulac was singing an improper song gave a great impetus to business at the Empire. The men about town, who prided themselves upon their knowledge of French, rushed to the theatre to hear the number, and to air their knowledge by translating it to their friends.

Hector Tennent, notwithstanding the excellent financial results, was furious because he had been fooled. He blamed me for the interview, and for a time refused me admission to the house. Afterwards we became friends again. Not long after this Odette Dulac retired, married, and devoted herself to sculpture. My success with her in England created for me an association with the French stage which I have maintained ever since.

Among the French artists I met about this time was the singer Mayol, with whom I made a contract for the Empire at £200 per week. But he never came to London to fulfil the engagement. Mayol, with those tuneful numbers by Paul Delmet and Christine (the composer of *Phi-Phi*) that he used to sing at the Scala, had a great following in Paris. He would, I feel confident, have been most popular in London as well. Mistinguett was at the Eldorado when first I met her. She was an eccentric comedienne of great originality, and specialised in low Parisian types. It was not until after Gaby Deslys returned from America, with those wonderful clothes and elaborate feather head-dresses that " Mis," as she is now universally known, became a queen of revue and took to wearing the most extravagant and fanciful creations of the dressmakers and the milliners. I met " Mis " while I was waiting to see Madame Marchand in her office at the Scala (Madame Marchand then directed both the Scala and the Eldorado), and we have been friends ever since.

Polaire, exceedingly slim and distinctive in type, was also at the Scala. She had talent and individuality, and it was not long before she made a hit as Claudine, a

character invented by Willy, which as a novelist he had already made popular.

Another popular soubrette of the day, who appeared at the Scala, was Elise de Vere. She spoke Parisian French, but her English was distinctly Cockney. Her father, an Englishman who lived in Paris, was a manufacturer of mechanical tricks for stage magicians. Her mother was a music-hall *illusioniste*—also English. Elise de Vere is now the wife of a film magnate, and lives in New York. Frankie Bailey, Millie Hylton, May Yohe, Addie Conyers (who committed suicide recently), and Mistinguett have all had their legs talked about, but I think Elise de Vere's legs were the shapeliest I ever saw.

During these agency days in the Strand I got music-hall engagements for three interesting, well-known women —Mrs. Brown Potter, Mabel, Countess Russell, and May Yohe, for a time Lady Francis Hope.

Mrs. Brown Potter did a spell of reciting in the Halls. Among other things she recited some Protectionist verses in praise of Mr. Joseph Chamberlain. Mabel, Countess Russell, was a good amateur skirt dancer, but she was hardly up to professional form. She attracted audiences at the Tivoli and at the Metropolitan for a few weeks.

May Yohe came back to London after a long absence. She had been in Japan with a new husband, the son of a New York mayor named Strong. She told one interviewer she loved to be Strong, she had got tired of Hope. I believe she has had several other husbands since then.

I am afraid her London reappearance was not successful. She had lost her youth, her indefinable personal charm, and, most unfortunate of all, her figure. She never had a great deal of talent, but in the old days at the Gaiety she sang songs in the one-time conventional coon costume, striped knickers, blouse-shirt, and broad-brimmed straw hat —the one knicker turned up was one of her little inventions —and she did undoubtedly become highly popular. So when she came to London again, and sang her old songs, and wore the well-remembered costume, old-timers rushed

to hear her once more. The queer deep notes in her voice when she sang "Linger Longer, Lucy," were still there. But that something, which is called charm, had gone.

One day during those Strand days I ran into Ethel Levey, who was staying at the Cecil with her husband, George M. Cohan. She wanted to try the English music-halls, but Mr. Cohan was against her working here.

But she was determined, and induced me to get her a trial show. She had an audition at the London Pavilion, and Herman Finck was good enough to play the piano for her—we met him outside the Pavilion, as we were going in. Miss Levey made a great impression on Frank Glenister and Hugh Astley. After she had done a song or two, they said, "We have seen enough. She can open to-night. What's her salary?" I told them she was a high-salaried artist in America, but I thought I could get her to accept £25 a week as she was unknown here.

"Twenty-five pounds a week!" repeated Astley and Glenister. "Twenty-five pounds a week—you must be mad!" If Miss Levey wanted to take £15 they would give it her, but no more.

I did not ask her to accept the offer. A week or so afterwards she gave a show at the Tivoli, and was a terrific success. George M. Cohan was not pleased, and did not allow her to accept any engagements. When ultimately she made her début in England it was at the Alhambra in a singing turn, and she received £100 a week.

I will tell of one incident which left a deep impression upon me. One day I was in my private office in the Strand, talking to Mrs. Brown Potter about a tour of the Keith Circuit in America, when the office boy came in to tell me that a gentleman outside said he *must* see me. It was very urgent. I sent a message that I would see the caller as soon as I was disengaged. The boy came back.

"The gentleman seems very strange," he said, "and says he must see you immediately. It's a matter of life and death."

Mrs. Brown Potter left to go, and I asked the boy to

show in the visitor. I never saw a living man look more like a corpse. He spoke with difficulty—it almost seemed as if he had no roof to his mouth.

He told me his hours were numbered. His doctor had said that he would not last twenty-four hours in London; but that if he went immediately to Bournemouth he might live three or four days.

"I must leave within an hour," he said; "but before I go I want you—I implore you—to do something for me. I do not wish to die until I have seen——" (he mentioned the name of a very beautiful girl who at one time was at the Gaiety, and is now a peeress). "I was told you would know her address. For God's sake find her and tell her to come to me at Bournemouth."

He gave me the name of the hotel at Bournemouth where he was to be found. He begged me to impress upon the girl that he was dying, and she must come immediately. He said he was too ill to write, and entreated me to give the message verbally.

"I wish to speak to her about the hereafter," he ended. "I have the fear that she is living a life which will lead to everlasting hell-fire. I know she will come if you find her."

I did not know where the lady lived; she had recently moved; but I did find her. She took the next train to Bournemouth, and I believe she was with her friend when he died an hour or so after she arrived.

CHAPTER XIV

My First Meeting with Hackenschmidt—*Daily Mail* Article—The M.C. with the Monocle—Hackenschmidt not a Good Showman—"The Battle of Clayton Square"—Turning out the Gas in the Liverpool Theatre—The Theatre locked against us—I am struck on the Head and thrown out.

DURING one of my visits to Paris I saw at the Folies-Bergère a world's championship wrestling tournament, and I was much struck by a young Russian named Georges Hackenschmidt. A little while afterwards I was standing on the steps of the Old Tivoli Music-Hall talking to Vernon Dowsett, one of the last of the old school of music-hall managers, when Harry Taft, an American whistling comedian, passed by. He had some one with him. He stopped to talk to us, and introduced his companion, who proved to be Hackenschmidt.

Hackenschmidt had arrived in London the day before, and had already created a sensation. He had been to the Alhambra, where Jack Carkeek, the Cornish champion, was challenging all comers to wrestle him.

Hackenschmidt had answered this challenge in rather a sensational manner. He had been in a box in evening clothes, but stripping at the back of the box he had stepped on to the stage in wrestling kit. His appearance caused tremendous excitement.

But Carkeek, always a brilliant showman, had a plausible excuse for not there and then wrestling the young Russian. He talked so well, in fact, that in the end the audience cheered him and booed Hackenschmidt.

Hackenschmidt was most disheartened by this experience, and, as we talked on the steps of the Tivoli, he said

he meant to return at once to Paris. I told him he ought to stay in London. I went with him to the Hotel Cecil, where he stripped, and I was amazed by his magnificent physique. He had the smooth, easy-running muscles of the well-trained athlete. He had none of the bulging biceps of the conventional "strong man." He showed me some hand-springs, and I could see from a very few moves that he was as quick as lightning. I think physically he was the most superb specimen of humanity I have ever seen.

As I came out of the Cecil I met a lady who combined photography and journalism. I was full of Hackenschmidt; and not only told her about him, but dragged her back to the hotel and induced the strong man to give another display of himself. Forthwith she wrote an article with the alluring title of "Is Strength Genius?" and it appeared the following day in the *Daily Mail* as one of the famous leader-page articles.

With this article I went to George Adney Payne, who controlled the Syndicate Halls—the Oxford, Tivoli, London, Pavilion, Canterbury, and Paragon—and prevailed upon him to give me a contract for Hackenschmidt at the Tivoli for a trial week at £70 a week. I got my friend Peggy Bettinson to introduce Hackenschmidt at the National Sporting Club the next Monday night; Hackenschmidt stripped to go into the ring, and again his physique caused something like a sensation. I remember Teddy Bailey, Mr. Harry Preston's brother-in-law, telling me that of all the athletes he had seen Hackenschmidt had a physique that was unsurpassed. I bombarded the newspapers with photographs and stories, and indeed paved the way for the young wrestler to draw the town.

Well, Hackenschmidt now had his engagement; but there was still the matter of presenting him. He had a Belgian manager, M. Delmer; but we also wanted an M.C. to announce the wrestler and his various opponents. It was essential that it should be somebody with a knowledge of foreign languages, because to start with he would have to

take his instructions from M. Delmer ; moreover, most of the men with whom Hackenschmidt was to wrestle bore foreign names which sounded like sneezes. On the Saturday night, before the performance on the following Monday, Delmer and I sat at one of the marble tables in the Café Royal. We had been unable to find an M.C.

As we sat there a man came into the café accompanied by two smartly dressed women. He was wearing a monocle without a cord ; he had the glossiest of silk hats ; altogether he looked a most resplendent person. " That's the kind of man we want," said Delmer.

" Very well," said I ; " I will ask him."

To the astonishment of Delmer I did go up and speak to this important-looking individual. The man with the monocle made his excuses to the ladies ; and after a few minutes' talk agreed to take on the job. We were to pay him £5 a week. Not until afterwards did I tell Delmer that I had met this man, Alex Boss, previously, and that despite his outward splendour I knew him to be not over-prosperous.

Boss, indeed, remained with Hackenschmidt for a number of years. Just before the war he opened a shop on the Unter den Linden, not far from the British Embassy. He made a speciality of beautiful leather goods, dressing-cases, silver flasks, and things such as one gets at Asprey's and Vickery's. On the window appeared very prominently the words, " English articles de Luxe." Boss secured the patronage of the Crown Prince and his set, and they thought it chic to carry Old English cigarette cases and English hunting-flasks. When war broke out, Boss's shop was one of the first to be smashed by the Berlin mob, and Boss himself had to stay for quite a long time in the Ruhleben internment camp.

Hackenschmidt's week at the Tivoli—the week before Holy Week—broke the record of the house for receipts and, at the end of the engagement, George Adney Payne refused to let me leave the theatre until he had made another contract for Easter Monday. The price I asked

this time was £150 a week. Payne protested against the big increase, but in the end signed the agreement. Hackenschmidt played four weeks this time; but business was disappointing. He was not a showman; he did not know how to exhibit his prowess. He wrestled with a number of strong but unattractive-looking foreigners, and he made the mistake of putting them on their backs as quickly as he could. No bout lasted more than a couple of minutes. After the first rush to see him bad showmanship caused him to be no attraction. To his credit Hackenschmidt would only wrestle on the level, and the public wanted a show. George Adney Payne was very disappointed, and said he would never have Hackenschmidt in any of his houses again. George Adney Payne was one of the leading figures in the music-hall world, and undoubtedly understood his public. He was the father of Mr. Walter Payne, the present chairman of the West End Theatre Managers' Association, who started life as a barrister; but when his father died gave up the Bar and took up directorships in his father's enterprises.

Here, again, was discouragement; but something had to be done, and I knew that Hackenschmidt was one of the greatest wrestlers in the world. I knew little about wrestling, but was aware that Lancashire was its stronghold. I could not get any of the regular music-halls to offer an engagement, so I went to Liverpool to see what could be done. I found that the Prince of Wales' Theatre in Clayton Square was empty, and up for sale. It was in the hands of a Mr. Cleaver, and I sought him out and made arrangements to take over the theatre for three months. Then I got busy calling upon the newspapers and getting them to announce that Hackenschmidt was coming to Liverpool, and was ready to wrestle all comers. I threw out a special challenge to Tom Cannon, the retired champion of England, who was living in Liverpool.

I signed a contract for the theatre, and paid the rent in advance. Then came the first hitch. Mr. Cleaver was advised that he might be endangering the licence by allow-

ing wrestling contests to take place in the theatre, and he notified me that he could not allow Hackenschmidt to give his performance. He even refused to return the money paid in advance, arguing that when he let the theatre he did not expect us to do anything that might interfere with the licence. On the advice of a local solicitor we retained possession of the theatre. We were within our rights, as there was nothing in the licence that would prohibit wrestling. It was only a question what view the magistrates might take when a new licence was applied for. Should there be disorderly conduct, for instance, the licensing magistrates might probably take a serious view. I suppose, in fact, that Cleaver got a sudden fear that the holding of the wrestling tournament might have a damaging effect upon the sale of the property. Our argument was that we had gone to considerable outlay renting the theatre, advertising the tournament, and paying the expenses of wrestlers who had come from the Continent.

The newspapers stated that the contests would not take place, I paraded the streets of Liverpool with hundreds of sandwichmen announcing that Hackenschmidt always fulfilled his obligations to his public, and that he would positively appear to meet all comers. Cleaver, as a counterblast, sent out sandwichmen, denying that Hackenschmidt would appear. Naturally, the two lots of sandwichmen became infected with the atmosphere of rivalry, and there were encounters in the streets. Our men won. Liverpool became quite excited over the controversy, and Clayton Square was filled, the first day of the proposed contests, with a great crowd. Hackenschmidt and the other wrestlers took turns staying in the theatre guarding the doors, so that they could not be locked against us. We also reinforced the wrestlers by a party of local fighting men.

There had been one other difficulty—the lighting. When I went to arrange for the gas to be turned on I was told that the theatre was in arrears, and the gas company declined to supply any more gas until the arrears were

paid. I argued that I had paid for the theatre, and that it was not my fault if the gas bill was owing ; the gas company were punishing me and not Cleaver in not providing gas, for which I was willing to pay in advance. Fortunately for me, an official of the gas company happened to be a wrestling enthusiast, and through him the company promised the necessary lighting supply.

But our troubles were not yet over. Night came. The lighting seemed all right. But just as we were about to admit the public the lights went out. Cleaver had won another momentary victory—somebody had cut the pipes. We discovered where the cut had been made, and found that the ends were soldered up so perfectly it must have been done by an expert. Fortunately the friendly official, who had helped me out at the gas company's office, had come to the theatre to be introduced to Hackenschmidt and the wrestlers, and also to officiate as time-keeper ; and he got to work like a Trojan. He hunted up some gas-fitters, and promised me that the lights should be on in half an hour. I went out on to the balcony and told the crowd in the square below what happened, and promised them that if they would wait they should have the show. In less than half an hour the house was illuminated again ; the doors were thrown open ; and the entertainment was given to a packed house.

That night's performance was a great success ; but unfortunately our contract was not for consecutive nights. We had thought it better to have a two days' interval, so that we could work up interest in the fresh contract by challenges in the press. Our solicitor warned us that we must give up possession at midnight or be guilty of trespass. Then we must endeavour to secure the theatre again, by force if necessary, on the morning of the next contract date. Accordingly, after formally applying for the key of the theatre, and being refused, I went to the theatre early on the morning of the day when the second show was to be given. The doors were barricaded. We found a side door with a glass pane in it ; this we broke. It was

possible then to put an arm through and unbolt the door. It looked as if we had successfully stormed the place. I started up the passage with others of my party at my heels. But, just as I turned the corner, I received a blow on the head, and I was seized and thrown into the square. There was a fire hose, worked from the balcony, for those of my party who tried to get in at the front of the theatre.

We returned to the attack, and at last forced an entrance. But it was a hollow victory. All the light fittings had been taken away; the seats also had been removed. We were beaten.

The local papers gave a lot of space to the incident, which they called "The Battle of Clayton Square." Hackenschmidt, who was a modest and sensitive man, was much upset by the proceedings. He spoke no English, and it was difficult to explain the facts so that he could understand them. He felt that there was no chance for him in England; that there was a prejudice either against him or against the sport of wrestling. He wanted to leave the country, but I prevailed upon him to stay.

I was advised that it would be throwing good money after bad to commence an action against Mr. Cleaver.

CHAPTER XV

Hackenschmidt becomes an Idol—His Match at Olympia with Madrali —Stories of Antonio Pierri, " The Terrible Turk "—The Wrestling Policeman—Why Zbysco lived in Fleet Street—The Scotsman who chased Zbysco—The Great Contest between Zbysco and Padoubny —Hackenschmidt defeated by Gotch.

HACKENSCHMIDT'S first appearance in London at the Tivoli had been so successful financially, it seemed strange that it was now difficult to get him an engagement. All the music-hall managers declared that he was not a good turn—which was true.

He was an enormously strong man ; but possessed none of the arts and tricks of showmanship that Jack Carkeek, for instance, who had been doing well as a music-hall turn, had been able to pick up. No London manager would give me a contract for Hackenschmidt ; but, through Walter de Frece, who was on the Board of the Palace Theatre, Manchester, I managed to secure a two-weeks' engagement there at £150 per week.

Hackenschmidt was determined that this engagement should be successful. It was obvious that the music-hall public did not want straight wrestling—they wanted a " show," and a " show " they were given. Hackenschmidt played with his opponents, and allowed them to appear at times to have an advantage.

One of the members of the troupe, a German named Schackmann, played the rôle of a brutal wrestler, who would not listen to the referee though repeatedly warned about foul tactics. Local men who accepted the offer of £25 if they could stay ten minutes were allowed to stay the full time, and amid scenes of the wildest enthusiasm

a match to a finish would be arranged for a later night. The time came when Tom Cannon, the champion of England, stayed the time, and demanded a further match.

The engagement was nothing short of a triumph. The theatre was packed to its utmost capacity nightly, and prices were raised. The engagement was extended for several weeks, and Hackenschmidt became a Manchester idol. Let me remind those who would condemn this deception that it was only, after all, a music-hall show. Hackenschmidt never faked a serious match, though many offers of large sums of money to do so were made to him. He simply became, for the purposes of the music-hall, a showman. He deceived the audience as Houdini, or any of the music-hall magicians, deceived theirs. The audience wanted thrills, even though they were artificial, and Hackenschmidt gave them thrills in plenty.

As a result of his success in Manchester other provincial engagements were forthcoming, but he was still barred from London. By this time I was doing quite a good business as an agent, and I never failed, when the opportunity occurred, to mention to managers the name of Hackenschmidt as a sure drawing card. The answer was always the same—" No good for London "—until one day George Adney Payne told me he wanted a " top of the bill " for the Canterbury and Paragon. I pleaded with him to try Hackenschmidt again—and after much argument succeeded. But he gave Hackenschmidt only £100 a week for the two places. This hardly covered the cost of the men who wrestled with him, the transportation between the Halls, and other incidental expenses. But I assured Payne that he would be turning money away at both places before the end of the week.

" If you can do that," he replied, " Hackenschmidt would be worth double. Nobody has done it at the Canterbury or Paragon for many a day."

Sure enough, by the Wednesday both houses were refusing money. We were helped from an unexpected quarter. The old wrestler, Antonio Pierri (known as

" The Terrible Turk "), arrived with a new protégé, a Turk named Madrali. Pierri brought this new " Terrible Turk " to the Canterbury one night, and challenged Hackenschmidt from the stalls. Hackenschmidt refused, saying that his challenge was open only to British wrestlers. Pandemonium broke out. Pierri went off to the office of a sporting paper, and put down some money to back a challenge to Hackenschmidt for a fight to a finish. The newspapers became as full of Hackenschmidt and Madrali as they were, in years to come, of Dempsey and Carpentier. Madrali was engaged at the Pavilion. Hackenschmidt was the draw at the Canterbury, the Paragon, and other out-lying Halls.

Madrali proved a worse showman than Hackenschmidt had been on his first appearance ; but Antonio Pierri made people believe that Hackenschmidt would meet his Waterloo when he met Madrali in a serious match. Hackenschmidt himself believed Madrali to be a very tough customer. He had met Turks before, in the Continental tournaments, and knew their strength. He also had had experience of foul tricks practised without detection by the referees.

After long discussions, articles were signed for a match that was to take place at Olympia on 30th January 1904. This was my first association with the great Hall with which I had much to do later on. Hugh Astley, brother of the famous Sir John, " The Mate," and George Adney Payne, were the stake-holders. London became wrestling mad. The boys in the street were always trying conclusions on the pavement. Supper-parties often culminated in " holds " being discussed and demonstrated. And Apollo came along with Ukio Tani, and issued a challenge to Hackenschmidt, Madrali, and all the professional wrestlers, asking them to meet Tani in the ju-jitsu style. Wrestlers arrived from every land.

I never saw a more nervous man than Hackenschmidt just before his contest with Madrali. I remember going to his dressing-room with Eugène Corri, who was astonished

MADRALI
The Terrible Turk.

CHARLES B. COCHRAN

GEORGES HACKENSCHMIDT
The Russian Lion.

CARICATURES BY HORACE MOREHEN

to see him as white as a sheet, pacing up and down his room like a tiger. Pierri had managed to influence public opinion in favour of Madrali. All the knowing ones were betting on the Turk. Charlie Mitchell, boxing ex-champion of England, was one of Madrali's warmest supporters. Apollo was another.

The event drew a crowded and fashionable audience at Olympia. It was the first time anything of the kind had been known in England ; and that gathering has scarcely been exceeded even at the big boxing matches staged in recent years at Olympia.

At the call of time Madrali very slowly moved towards Hackenschmidt. But the Russian rushed at his opponent like a tiger, encircled his huge body with his arms, lifted him shoulder high, and threw him on the ground with a thud that sounded like a sack of potatoes falling.

The match was over. The big Turk lay there with his arms broken. Several people, who had paid large sums for their seats, arrived to find the match over.

From that moment Hackenschmidt was a national hero. Nationality never counts with the British sporting public. Although a Russian, Hackenschmidt became—as Carpentier did later—a British institution.

Pierri made the most of the accident, declared that Hackenschmidt's victory was a fluke which could never happen again ; and he issued a challenge for another meeting as soon as the Turk should have recovered.

Meanwhile, offers poured in for Hackenschmidt's services. So far from it being difficult, as before, to get engagements, we now had to refuse them. Hackenschmidt became a stock feature at the Oxford and the other Syndicate Halls. Always improving as a showman, he never failed to be a drawing card. Wrestlers still arrived from the Continent. There was Jess Pedersen, a Dane, who just before had won the World's Græco-Roman Championship in Paris ; there were Lurich and Aberg, Russians, Jacobus Koch, a German—and many others. All these men were giants in strength, but they never took the fancy of the

British public. They wrestled in the Græco-Roman style, which permits holds only above the waist, and can be intolerably slow when two well-matched men meet. Pedersen met Aberg at the Royal, Holborn—now the Holborn Empire. The men mauled away at each other, and neither gained a fall. The audience cried " fake " and sang " Dear Old Pals ! " and at last the house became so unruly that Harry Lundy, the manager, came on the stage, stopped the match, and said he would not allow such an exhibition to continue in a theatre under his management. Now this match was entirely genuine. It was, in fact, a *needle* match ; but the public knew so little about wrestling that they thought it was *a fake*. I found this was generally the case where straight matches were concerned ; whereas, when a good exhibition wrestler would allow his opponent to slip away, and get out of dangerous-looking holds, with extraordinary head-spins and all sorts of monkey tricks which were nothing more or less than showmanship, the audience would go mad with excitement.

The majority of foreign wrestlers had but short stays in England—they could not interest the public. Hackenschmidt remained and held undisputed sway. His popularity with the public increased more and more, and that was not to be wondered at, because he had a charming nature, great modesty, and intelligence. Moreover, although he allowed himself to be governed by the demand of his public for showmanship, when he wrestled a match to a finish he was always on the level, and he always won. The purse for the Hackenschmidt-Madrali match was the largest known up to that time in England for wrestling, and I do not believe it had then been equalled for boxing. Hackenschmidt received £1000, and Pierri, for Madrali, £500. I have the cheques for this match framed in my office ; they are signed by the stake-holders, Hugh Astley and George Adney Payne.

Hackenschmidt and Madrali met again at Olympia in April 1906. The match was for two out of three falls. Hackenschmidt won.

Antonio Pierri was cross-eyed, with a head shaped like an egg. There wasn't a trick in the game he didn't know and would not practise. In prefacing a business conversation he would invariably say, "Antonio Pierri very straighta man; cannot tella lie." During one of the preliminary confabs over the Hackenschmidt-Madrali match, Frank Glenister, the manager of the Pavilion, was opening a bottle of whisky in his office at the Pavilion. Pierri had just started the ball rolling with the above sentence, when I am afraid I upset him by saying, "Yes, as straight as the corkscrew in Mr. Glenister's hand." However, Pierri was not very easily insulted if there seemed any money about.

He paid Madrali £5 per week and his keep. Being chaffed about this, at a time when he was earning well over £100 with him, Pierri indignantly retorted: "Ah, you should see how she eats" (he never got his sexes right in his conversation). "Every day she eata the whole legga mutton."

This was contradicted by one of Madrali's wrestling partners, who declared that the Sunday leg of mutton had to last the week. For the rest Madrali was filled up with rice, of which Pierri bought huge sacks. Pierri paid Madrali in coppers and threepenny bits to make the £5 look a lot of money.

One of the great northern towns boasted a number of adepts at wrestling, especially a policeman, who was considered unbeatable. Any of the wrestling champions could do a successful week in this town by allowing the policeman to stay the time limit of ten minutes early in the week, because this resulted in the audience insisting upon another match, which was always arranged for a Friday—usually the worst night in the week.

I am sorry to say that this policeman refused to enter into any match unless a guarantee was given that he should not be beaten. Sometimes, when there had been a couple of drawn matches on the music-hall stage, a match to a finish on the football ground was arranged, and a great gate resulted. The policeman would win, and the

loser got the lion's share of the plunder for allowing him to do so.

For a long time the policeman would not make a match with Hackenschmidt, because Hackenschmidt would not consider any such arrangement. At last, helped by the pressure of public feeling, I was able to force the local man to sign articles. Hackenschmidt and myself were in our hotel the night before the match, when we had a mysterious caller. He came on behalf of the policeman. His townsmen would never believe, our visitor told us, that the local champion could be beaten by Hackenschmidt, and if Hackenschmidt won, the match would be thought to be a fake. A riot would ensue, and the policeman would lose his job and pension. Many suggestions were made. That Hackenschmidt should appear to injure himself and the match be declared a draw, was one that I remember. That each should gain a fall, and then that the deciding bout should last so long that nightfall would come on and the match be declared a draw, was another. We told the intermediary that the policeman must do his best to win the match—Hackenschmidt certainly would do so. Next day, on the ground, just before the commencing time, the policeman and his friend sent for me. The man in blue enlarged on the things that would happen were he to be defeated. He begged, and almost cried, but in vain. He kept me, however, long past the time for the contest to begin, and the crowd began to show impatience. I returned to Hackenschmidt and told him what had happened.

Hackenschmidt won easily, gaining two consecutive falls. Still he had compassion on the policeman, and allowed him to put up something of a show before he pinned his shoulders to the ground. So far from there being a riot, the huge crowd seemed to be delighted with the result. I was told that afterwards, when some small boy on the policeman's beat called out, "Hack's coming," the big fellow used to get crazy with anger.

Hackenschmidt made an Australian tour; but I did not

go with him. He returned by way of California, and I met him in Chicago. I arranged several matches and exhibitions for him, and financially the trip was successful. I had hoped to arrange for a match with Frank Gotch, the American champion, but was unable to do so on this trip. Hackenschmidt had beaten Tom Jenkins decisively in London at the Albert Hall, and again in New York at Madison Square Gardens; and although Gotch eventually beat Jenkins, Jenkins had formerly beat Gotch. Jenkins was wont to say that Hackenschmidt could beat Gotch with one of his hands tied behind his back. This did not prove to be the case when Hackenschmidt and Gotch eventually met in Chicago.

Hackenschmidt was a very big eater. Knowing this, my wife prepared lots of food when he came to dine with us one night at our flat in Piccadilly. Dinner was ready. Hackenschmidt ate eight or nine eggs, a porterhouse-steak, and a whole Camembert cheese. My wife, having almost exhausted the supplies that were in the house, timidly asked Hackenschmidt if she could get him anything more.

"No thanks," he said; "I have to dine with some friends, so I will not spoil my appetite."

When Hackenschmidt was in Australia I arranged a few matches for Tom Jenkins, a very decent fellow, who is now, I believe, or at any rate was until recently, a gymnastic instructor at West Point in America. Later I brought over Zbysco, a remarkably strong man from Krakow, of somewhat unprepossessing appearance. The British public hated him as cordially as they liked Hackenschmidt. Nevertheless he was a great drawing card. Whereas they came with the hope of seeing Hackenschmidt win, they came hoping to see Zbysco beaten. He was a splendid showman, and gave the public exactly what they wanted.

My contract with Zbysco was prepared by my friend and solicitor, Mr. Amery Parkes, of Fleet Street, and I went with it to Budapest to secure Zbysco's signature.

The document was of a simple nature; but, being made

with a foreigner in a foreign country, it contained the harmless, but necessary, clause that the wrestler must accept a legal domicile in London; and for the purpose of convenience this was made to be my own solicitor's offices in Fleet Street.

Zbysco signed the document, and then learned the contract by heart.

He duly arrived in London and located himself at Peel's Hotel, at the corner of Fetter Lane and Fleet Street. I suggested to him that he should move his abode to a locality of a more residential nature; but the Galician would not be budged. Because I asked him to move, he seemed to become suspicious of me, and a shadow came over our friendly relations.

Some time later, when Zbysco had learned to have perfect confidence in me, he told me that he had interpreted the contract to mean that during his stay in England he must live in Fleet Street, and he feared when I urged him to move that for some reason or other I was endeavouring to make him break his contract.

One of Zbysco's shows at the London Pavilion created such excitement that the audience commenced to wreck the house. The manager, Mr. Frank Glenister, was on the Continent, and in his absence, Mr. Hugh Astley, the chairman, cancelled the engagement there and then, notwithstanding the record business that was being done. He explained that he was frightened that the licence of the Pavilion might be imperilled. He told me afterwards he thought Zbysco would have been beaten had the bout not been stopped; that was really why he adopted such drastic measures.

The circumstances were these. A big Turk, named Kara Suliman, had arrived at the London Pavilion with his manager, and issued a challenge from the audience. Zbysco had a standing challenge to meet all comers providing they deposited money with the editor of the *Sportsman*. These terms had not been complied with by Suliman, so Zbysco declined to meet him. A day or so

afterwards the terms of the challenge were complied with, and the match took place. The conditions were that Zbysco should pay Suliman a sum of money should he not throw him within ten minutes. Zbysco failed to do this, and at times Suliman looked like throwing Zbysco. At the expiration of the ten minutes Suliman appeared to have the advantage; but the match was stopped by the referee, in accordance with the terms that had been agreed upon. The audience had got keen, and shouted for a wrestle to a finish. Zbysco declined to go on, and then the riot began. It would have been quelled without any harm being done, had not Mr. Astley given instructions to lower the iron curtain. This angered the audience so much that electric light fittings were actually taken from the wall and thrown on the stage.

Mr. Walter Gibbons, now Sir Walter, was at that time running the Holborn Empire and a number of suburban music-halls. He gave me a contract for Zbysco, who filled the Gibbons Halls for eighteen consecutive weeks. I made it a stipulation that I should have the Holborn Empire one afternoon for a match to a finish—two falls out of three—between Zbysco and Suliman. Owing to the interest caused by the Pavilion match, seats for the Holborn Empire contest went to high prices, and the receipts were something in the neighbourhood of £1000. At the signing of the articles at the *Sportsman* offices, I introduced a bit of showmanship which secured a great deal of publicity. It was a known fact that Turkish wrestlers sometimes covered themselves with a greasy substance which became apparent only when they warmed up. It then made their bodies extremely slippery, and consequently it was difficult for an opponent to secure a good hold. Although really I anticipated nothing of this kind, I brought up the point, and insisted that the contestants should have a warm bath in the theatre before taking the mat. The stipulation caused a long argument that prolonged the meeting for several hours; but I succeeded in having the clause incorporated in the articles. By the time we left the

Sportsman office, the evening papers were out with the contents bills: "Suliman and Zbysco to be bathed!" The morning papers followed up the story. The soap manufacturers, Messrs. Cook & Company, took the front page of the *Daily Mail* on the day of the match, and had an advertisement showing the two men being rubbed down by me with Cook's soap. They paid me well to use the soap!

Zbysco won the match by two straight falls.

After his London engagement Zbysco did enormous business in the provinces. I supplied him with a number of aggressive contestants, who always appeared to have a good chance with him—and this made for big receipts. I had learned from experience with Hackenschmidt that the music-hall public required *a show*, and I had no compunction in giving them what they wanted—*a show*.

A member of the troupe, who was particularly successful in creating excitement, and making the receipts go up, was a raw-boned Scotsman. Zbysco wrestled under Græco-Roman rules, but the Scotsman always disregarded these, and notwithstanding the protests of the referees, in the different towns we visited, practised catch-as-catch-can holds. In one case, I remember, he threw the referee himself into the orchestra.

This Scotsman would arrive in a town where Zbysco was appearing. He always wore a kilt, and was a striking figure. He would begin by asking at the railway station the way to the theatre where Zbysco was appearing; and he never uttered Zbysco's name without preceding it by a number of highly coloured and varied adjectives. Once he went to the opposition theatre and insisted on seeing the manager. In vain the manager said that Zbysco was not appearing at that theatre; the Scotsman shouted the louder, declaring that he was not going to be put off that way. Ultimately he was quietened and directed to the actual theatre where the wrestling was taking place. This furnished the manager of the opposition theatre with a bit of talk for his clientele, and resulted in a large number

of patrons of his " first house " accompanying him to see the excitement which he guaranteed them was going to take place at the " second house " of the rival establishment. They felt sure from the Scotsman's behaviour that Zbysco was going to be faced by one genuine opponent.

Whether he was beaten or disqualified, or stayed the time limit without being thrown, the Scotsman would always declare his intention of following Zbysco in the next town, so if the news of what had happened, say at Newcastle, got into the Glasgow papers, it heightened rather than depreciated the business.

During Zbysco's engagement at the London Pavilion, Sir Oswald (then Mr.) Stoll brought over the Russian, Padoubny. He was a veritable Hercules, and probably the strongest man in the world. He had considerable skill in the art of Græco-Roman wrestling, but knew nothing of catch-as-catch-can.

Mr. Stoll issued a challenge to the world on Padoubny's behalf, and particularly mentioned Hackenschmidt and Zbysco. A match with Zbysco was arranged in the offices of the *Sportsman* for £200 a side. Mr. Stoll's contract with Padoubny stipulated that he or his manager—a very knowing fellow named Dumond, who had organised the most successful championship tournaments in France—should back themselves with their own money. My contract with Zbysco called for the Pole to put up his own side bet. Moreover, Mr. Stoll insisted that one of the conditions of the match should be " winner take all." Articles to this effect were signed, and an arrangement was come to for the match to take place at the London Pavilion. The Pavilion management found the house, the staff, did the advertising, and took one-third of the receipts. The other two-thirds were to go to the winning wrestler.

I have never known Piccadilly Circus more crowded than on the day of the match. Although we charged a guinea for the majority of the seats—a very big price in those days—thousands were unable to gain admittance. A more violent contest has never been seen in London.

Both men were enormously strong. The day before the match I was walking with Zbysco in Regent's Park, and I asked him whether he felt sure of the result. He told me, I remember, that he was positive Padoubny could not get him off his feet; but, at the same time, he was not at all sure that he could move Padoubny.

And from the start it was obvious that Zbysco had sized up the situation properly. Both men stood like rocks.

After a few minutes Padoubny, finding himself unable to shift Zbysco, began a series of foul tricks, all the time growling out barbaric Cossack terms of abuse. He would take a neck-hold, and in breaking it would let the back of his hand fall heavily on Zbysco's ear. Several times he tried to push Zbysco's head back by putting the palm of his hand savagely under his chin. Then he would bring his elbow viciously in contact with Zbysco's chin. The audience repeatedly cried "Foul!" "Disqualify him!" and so on. Mr. G. T. Dunning, of the *Sportsman*—one of the squarest men who ever lived—was the referee, and repeatedly he warned Padoubny to desist, but to no purpose. Mr. Dunning was most anxious not to end the match by a disqualification, as he knew what dissatisfaction it would give to the audience, even though they were clamouring for it.

However, after twenty-five minutes of Padoubny's savagery, with Zbysco bleeding from mouth and ears, and the audience in a state of frenzy, Mr. Dunning stopped the match and disqualified the Russian. Antonio Pierri, "The Terrible Greek," Charlie Mitchell, and Apollo, were all in Padoubny's corner. Padoubny's party shouted execrations at Zbysco and his camp. It looked as if there would be an ugly finish.

I got hold of Mr. Dunning, whose paper was holding the stakes, hurried him into a cab, and took him down to Fleet Street. Upon arrival at the *Sportsman* office, I found that the cheque had been drawn, but not signed, and that the name of the drawee was not filled in. We were told that Mr. Batty Smith, one of the proprietors of the

Sportsman, was at the Victoria Club. Dunning and I went there with the cheque and got his signature. Then I returned to the London Pavilion, where the wrestlers and their followers were still arguing upon the stage. I asked Mr. Glenister to pay over immediately the wrestler's share of the gate. This he did. When I came out of Glenister's office I learned that Padoubny and his manager, with Pierri, Apollo, Mitchell, and others had gone to the *Sportsman* office, as I expected they might do. They had gone to protest against the paying over of the stake money. It was lucky I had forestalled them.

It may not be generally known that a stake-holder, who pays over the stakes, entrusted to him after a protest has been made, is liable under law to refund the amount, notwithstanding the decision of the referee. The *Sportsman* had been victimised some years before the time of which I am speaking, because they had paid over the stakes in a boxing match in which Dick Burge was concerned. Once the money is paid over according to the referee's decision, any protest which comes afterwards is invalid in law. But I knew my friend Pierri, and I anticipated what his advice to Dumond would be.

Padoubny was engaged to appear that night at the Shepherd's Bush Empire. He was in his dressing-room ready to go on when he received a notification from the Stoll Offices that, in accordance with a clause in his contract which gave Mr. Stoll the right to cancel it, in the event of his being beaten in any match, his engagement was then and there terminated. Dumond either had not understood the clause, or had forgotten its existence. What happened at the London Pavilion had cost him and Padoubny £200 in cash, and Padoubny had lost forty weeks' engagement on the Stoll Tour at a very big salary. Zbysco and I, on the other hand, had won Padoubny's £200, and about £700 as our share of the gate; also we had all the contracts we wanted from music-hall engagements.

A section of the sporting press suggested that the Zbysco-Padoubny match was *a fake*; but a more unjust

accusation was never made. It was in every sense a *needle* match. Padoubny was probably the world's greatest Græco-Roman wrestler, but he knew that it would take him hours to throw Zbysco by legitimate means, even if he could throw him at all. His tactics were to frighten the Pole. Had the match been in the hands of a weak referee, he might probably have gained a decision through sheer brutality.

Dumond had the reputation of being a pretty tough fellow, and I must confess that it was with some trepidation that I accepted an invitation to meet him the next day at the Cafè Monico. But I found him resigned to the position of affairs, and most philosophical about his losses. He was anxious to have a return match in a place which would hold more money than the London Pavilion. We could have filled Olympia ; but I could never get Zbysco to agree to take the mat again with Padoubny.

Despite Zbysco's somewhat unalluring appearance, he was a good soul. He was of good family, well-educated—even cultured. I found him most straightforward in his dealings. He was, however, only a strong man, and not an athlete such as the British admire. Hackenschmidt told me afterwards that he doubted whether he could ever have thrown Zbysco in the Græco-Roman style. It was, he said, almost impossible to throw a man of that type did he content himself to act entirely on the defensive.

I was with Zbysco in Liverpool when the news came through of Hackenschmidt's first defeat by Franck Gotch. I could scarcely realise it. I don't understand it even now. The press criticised Gotch's behaviour, and accused him of many unfair tactics. Those who saw the match tell me that the confidence and aggressiveness which Hackenschmidt always displayed, despite his nervousness before he went on the mat, was entirely lacking on this occasion. He appeared to act solely on the defensive. I made the financial arrangement for the Hackenschmidt-Gotch match ; but had severed my business relationship with Hackenschmidt before the match took place. Afterwards Hackenschmidt was beaten by Gotch for the second time.

I was in Berlin when the news arrived of the assassination of the Crown Prince Ferdinand of Austria. I had gone over with Edward Laurillard to see *Wie Einst in Mai*, which had been running successfully for a thousand performances or more. I had purchased the English rights, and also had an option for America. It was the story of *Milestones*, and Edward Knoblock, I believe, took steps towards getting an injunction. There were several delightful tunes, some of which were appropriated by an Anglo-American composer during the war, and introduced as his own compositions, into a successful revue at one of our large music-halls. The play was done in America by the Messrs. Shubert, under the title of *May-Time*, and was a success. My rights lapsed during the war.

The day I was returning to England I met Hackenschmidt on the Unter den Linden. We sat outside the Café Bauer and talked of old times. It has been said of the Café de la Paix in Paris that if one sits there long enough one sees everybody of note. The same might almost be said of the Café Bauer. Hackenschmidt was a thinking man, and was possessed of much common sense. He assured me that we were on the eve of a great European war, and that England would be drawn into it. He was impressed with the resources of the Fatherland to such an extent that he transferred to Germany a great deal of the money he had saved and invested most discreetly in England. He was by way of being a rich man when the war came ; but, although the last time I saw him he told me he was sufficiently well-off to live for the rest of his life without working, he led me to suppose that his fortune had considerably diminished.

CHAPTER XVI

"The Cowboy Hypnotist"—The Woman in a Trance at the Holborn Empire—Ahrensmeyer and the Coach-and-Four Drive from the *Evening News* Office—You "didn't concentrate"—Hackenschmidt's Remarkable Recovery—An Extraordinary Coincidence—Lord Queensberry's Experience at Walham Green—A Great Deal in Showmanship.

IN the heyday of Hackenschmidt's London success, there came to me a man named Ahrensmeyer, who claimed hypnotic powers. He was an illiterate fellow, but I noticed that he had a remarkable eye. He said that he could put subjects in a state of trance; he could make a man become rigid, so that with his heels on one chair and his head on another a stone could be broken on his body.

I accepted his invitation to a demonstration of his powers, and in a room in Maiden Lane, to which came a strange assortment of human oddments, Ahrensmeyer amazed me by some extraordinary tests. A heavy stone was actually broken on a man's body; and apparently he did put some of his subjects into a state of trance—certainly I saw needles pass through their arms and under their finger nails without their being aroused from their sleep. In fact, though I doubted whether such powers could be exercised upon normal human beings, I saw enough to convince me that the man did possess strange powers. His subjects were a derelict lot. Most of them had been in the employ of the mesmerist Kennedy during the time of his great vogue at the Westminster Aquarium many years before. How they had existed since I never found out. It is a fact that George Robey counts amongst his earliest experiences on the professional stage that of being a mesmeric subject of this same Kennedy

at the Westminster Aquarium. I doubt if he was ever actually hypnotised; but he furnished most excellent comic relief. He made the audiences roar by eating candles and doing other absurd things, whilst apparently in a mesmerised state.

Ahrensmeyer's demonstration impressed me very much indeed. Undoubtedly there is an enormous amount of "fake" in connection with music-hall displays of psychic power; at the same time, there is behind it all generally some abnormal power that itself is of a genuine nature. It was obvious that clever showmanship would be needed for Ahrensmeyer's feats to be presented to the public with any effective success. For one thing, Ahrensmeyer would be quite unable to address an audience. An idea struck me—I would call him "The Cowboy Hypnotist," and dress him like the film actor, Tom Mix, in a Western picture. Ahrensmeyer agreed to this, and I engaged as M.C. an actor named John Dixon, who had been playing in melodrama at the Adelphi. Dixon, the son of a Canadian divine, had studied medicine and practised dentistry; he was interested in psychic matters; had read many of the books on the subject; and had sufficient knowledge of medicine to be able to put up an argument with the medical students who were certain to come along to heckle such a show as Ahrensmeyer would give.

It was Walter Gibbons, now Sir Walter, who gave me a start for Ahrensmeyer at the Holborn Empire. The show was at once successful. Crowds were drawn during the day by the exhibition in the lobby of a woman in a trance. Ahrensmeyer publicly hypnotised her every morning at ten o'clock, and at night she was carried on to the stage and awakened. During the day an endless queue passed round her as she lay on her bed asleep. There were scenes created by scoffers at most of the earlier performances; but Dixon handled them cleverly. Ahrensmeyer performed all the stock tricks made famous by Kennedy, including the performance of ridiculous antics by some of the subjects.

One day Ahrensmeyer mentioned to me—he was always most confident about his powers—that he could put a person into a hypnotic trance over the telephone, so long as he was not too far away from the subject. He went on to say that he could drive a four-in-hand blindfolded over a route unknown to him, but previously driven over by some one else, even through the crowded streets of London. Here seemed to be a spectacular test that would bring publicity to the show at the Holborn. I spoke about what Ahrensmeyer had said to Mr. J. M. Dick, the sporting editor of the *Evening News*. Johnny Dick, always of an enthusiastic nature, said he would much like to see the four-in-hand experiment. So one morning one of Ahrensmeyer's subjects sat in Mr. Dick's office, in Carmelite House, while Ahrensmeyer, on the telephone at the Holborn Empire, put him into an hypnotic trance. People came into the *Evening News* office to apply tests to the sleeping subject. Pins were stuck into the man's calves ; his hand was even burnt with the lighted end of a cigarette ; but he slept on until we placed the receiving end of the telephone to his ear, and Ahrensmeyer, influencing him from up in Holborn, wakened him. The test seemed an extraordinary one.

The next thing was the coach-and-four experiment. Mr. Dick and three or four other people went out to the waiting coach and were taken for a short drive. Ahrensmeyer, meanwhile, had come over from the Holborn Empire and was locked up in Mr. Dick's office. The test was for Ahrensmeyer, blindfolded, to drive the coach-and-four through the streets along which it had previously passed. He was blindfolded, led to the coach, and perched on the box seat. Mr. Dick and his party and myself mounted the coach also. On the way to the coach Ahrensmeyer kept on repeating, " You must concentrate ; you must concentrate on the route you have just been over."

What happened was that on the word " Go " Ahrensmeyer let the reins fall loosely on the horses' backs, and

the animals dashed forward from the *Evening News* offices towards the Embankment. The way was clear at the start ; the coach took the middle of the road ; but though Ahrensmeyer kept calling out, " Concentrate ; you must concentrate," it was obvious that there was no control over the four horses. I will admit that I felt nervous. One or two members of the party prepared to jump off. It looked as if we were going to crash into a lamp-post on a refuge on the Embankment, when, fortunately, some City policeman came into the performance, and they stopped the horses.

There was a certain amount of recrimination, and Ahrensmeyer, tearing off the bandage with which he was blindfolded, said angrily to Mr. J. M. Dick, " How could I perform this feat unless you fellows concentrated ? That was what was wrong ; you didn't concentrate."

I believe we accepted his assurance that he could have gone over the chosen route had the police not stopped the coach. At any rate, we were glad to get off, and I suppose it could be argued that, as far as we had gone, the coach had taken the direction previously followed by Mr. Dick and his companion.

We ended the day by adjourning to a well-known Fleet Street tavern, and there was much talk about mental suggestion and about psychic matters in general. Ahrensmeyer was undeterred by the experience of the coach, and as Mr. Dick admitted to being considerably impressed by the hypnotising of the man over the telephone, Ahrensmeyer assured him he could cure a sick person by mere suggestion, even though he were nowhere near him.

Now, the night before, Hackenschmidt had been taken ill, and was unable to fulfil his engagement at the Canterbury. It had also been reported to me that he was still unwell, and was not likely to appear again on the stage until the following week. This, of course, meant considerable loss to me ; and hearing Ahrensmeyer's latest

claim, I said half-jokingly, "I wish to goodness you could cure Hackenschmidt, and make him turn up at the Canterbury to-night."

"All right," replied Ahrensmeyer; "I'll do that."

He went to the end of the saloon bar, closed his eyes, put his hand to his forehead, and appeared to be thinking hard. Then he rejoined the party, some of whom talked jocularly about what he said he was going to do. Ahrensmeyer remained serious. The drinks went round, and when we broke up I doubt if any one thought more of Ahrensmeyer's claim. I did not go to the Canterbury that night, and I did not call to inquire after Hackenschmidt's health.

The next morning, when I reached my office, Fred Miller, the manager of the Canterbury, rang me up. "Can we expect Hackenschmidt again to-night," he said; "and for the rest of the week?"

"I haven't seen him this morning yet," I replied; "but I shouldn't think it is at all likely."

"Really," said Mr. Miller. "That's odd. He seemed all right last night and gave me a splendid show. Until he telephoned during the afternoon we had not expected him."

"Do you mean to say," said I, "that he turned up? He told me in the morning he couldn't possibly appear."

"Yes," replied Mr. Miller; "he came along, and has never given a better show."

Through my mind flashed a recollection of the previous afternoon's scene in the Fleet Street inn. The time that Hackenschmidt telephoned Mr. Miller just about coincided with the time when Ahrensmeyer had put his hand to his forehead and said he would will Hackenschmidt to be well again.

Here, indeed, was a coincidence; something of a startling, almost an incredible nature. I am a showman, and opportunity such as this was not to be missed. In great excitement I got J. M. Dick on the telephone and narrated the circumstances. Two *Evening News* reporters went off

immediately, one to the Canterbury, and one to Hackenschmidt's lodgings; and the result of their inquiries was the verification of this truly amazing set of coincidences. The paper that night gave the story prominence, and came out with a contents bill—"HACKENSCHMIDT cured by COWBOY HYPNOTIST." I, of course, got the credit for a striking bit of showmanship on behalf of my two "stars." But, coincidence or not, what I have related is gospel truth, and the circumstances were not arranged in any way.

Ahrensmeyer's success increased. If on a Monday night he opened at a Hall to a moderate audience, by the end of the week money would be refused. Dixon and I were always planning new stunts to excite the audience.

The late Marquis of Queensberry had known Dixon in Canada, and was also a friend of mine. I remember one night he went with me to the Granville, Walham Green, where Ahrensmeyer was showing. Dixon had invited any person suffering from mental breakdown or nervous disorder of any kind to come on the stage and submit to a treatment by Ahrensmeyer. Poor Queensberry had been having a bad time, and was in a worried state. After talking to me, he accepted Dixon's invitation. He got up from his seat and walked on the runway over the orchestra to the stage, where Dixon put his usual question, "May I have your card, sir?" The card was handed to him, and in his stentorian voice Dixon announced to the public "The Marquis of Queensberry." The audience would not believe him. They burst into cat-calls and rude exclamations, such as "The Marquis of Walham Green!" "The Marquis of Bally Raspberry!"

Dixon professed the greatest indignation, and begged his audience to pay some respect to the peer, whose education enabled him to appreciate the benefits which were being offered, but which the gallery had not the mental capacity to understand. A shrill voice called out, "If he's the Marquis of Queensberry get him to put the gloves on with you, Fatty!"—meaning Dixon.

It looked as if I had in Ahrensmeyer as big an attraction

almost as Hackenschmidt. But, whereas Hackenschmidt was modest with plenty of good sense, Ahrensmeyer lost his head. In his opening address, Dixon, with dramatic effect, would point to Ahrensmeyer and say, "This illiterate fellow—this uncultured product of the plains, whose knowledge comes not from books, but from the sighing of the wind in the trees and the babbling of the brooks—he can neither read nor write. But, ladies and gentlemen, he holds secrets of nature which you can never know!"

This harangue excused the uncouth air of the hypnotist, and invariably made a great impression. But Ahrensmeyer, realising that he was a success, began to resent this form of introduction. "Cut out the stuff about me being an illiterate fellow," he would say.

Dixon and I used all our powers to keep him satisfied; but finally he got to high words with Dixon, who told me that he was fed up, and wouldn't go on any longer. Ahrensmeyer wanted me to send him out in the country, and let him run his show his own way. I knew that it couldn't be successful, and so I refused to agree.

However, he got an engagement at Plymouth, and he addressed the audience in his own way. When the usual questions came from members of the audience he was quite unable to return satisfactory answers. Then he lost his temper, and insulted the audience. His first performance at Plymouth ended in a riot, and the police had to be called in to get the people out of the theatre.

This finished his career for a time; but ultimately another daring manager gave him an engagement at Belfast. He managed to get through for a few days; but on Saturday night an even worse riot took place. There's a great deal in showmanship!

CHAPTER XVII

A Bet with a Strand Tailor—My First Management Venture in a London Theatre—"Pa" Payne and Olympia—Introduction of the Movable Seats—Indoor Football—"Fun City" and the Richardson Show—The Bull of Benares "Stunt"—Sacco, the Fasting Man—The Roller-Skating Boom.

MY agency offices were for some time at No. 60, the Strand, on the second floor. The first floor was occupied by a sporting tailor, Charles Finney, who was by way of being a character. Sometimes Finney would assemble some of the "knuts" from Romano's Bar in his room, at the foot of my stairs, to let them watch the pretty girls go up and down.

I had a bet with Finney which amused the frequenters of Romano's Bar very much. The story was told by the inimitable Arthur Binstead, in the *Sporting Times*.

I had ordered an overcoat, and Finney faithfully promised delivery by 6 p.m., on a certain day. Two hours before the agreed time I looked in on Finney, and impressed upon him not to be late with the coat because I was going away and wanted to wear it. He assured me the coat would be delivered all right; but I did not feel very confident, and said, "I'll bet you 10s. it won't be here by six." "I'll bet you £20 to £1 that it *is*," replied Finney, and the bet was made.

A few minutes before 6 p.m. I went into Finney's shop, and Finney chuckled: "Have you your pound ready?"

One minute remained. Finney looked bewildered. Half a minute to spare! And by this time he was at the window looking up and down the Strand. Six o'clock

struck. Not a sign of the coat! Finney, angry and excited, explained that he had been betting on a certainty. The coat was actually in the shop when I first asked for it. But to stage manage the bet he had sent his man out with the garment a few minutes before six o'clock, and told him to watch the clock—his shop was over Dent's, the clockmakers who looked after Big Ben—and to come in with the coat one minute before the hour. He could not for the life of him think what had happened to the man.

At five minutes past six a little Polish tailor strolled into the shop with the coat over his arm. There were few known words of abuse not used by Finney in his greetings of him. What had happened was this. The little man had stood at the corner of Bedford Street watching Dent's clock, according to instructions, but up came a friend who suggested a drink at the neighbouring "Bodega." The tailor could not resist. Hence Finney's liability to pay me £20. I compromised for a suit of clothes. Afterwards, Finney told me that the advertisement Arthur Binstead gave him in the *Pink 'Un* paid for the suit many times over.

In the early nineteen hundreds I had my first spell of management at a London Theatre. With the late George Giddens—a splendid comedian and a splendid man—I took the Royalty Theatre. We had very little money, and we produced two plays. As both failed, our management did not last long. The first was a farce called *Sporting Simpson*, by an untried dramatist. This we followed with a fairly amusing play, *Lyre and Lancet*, by F. Anstey.

We had quite a good cast, that included Cosmo Gordon-Lennox, Lettice Fairfax, Mabel Beardsley, James Lindsay, Fitzroy Morgan, and Giddens himself.

The farce dealt with "high life below stairs." The characters were well drawn, the dialogue was most amusing, and the laughs were very frequent during the performance; but the play did not attract. I remember Mostyn Pigott warning me that it would be a failure because playgoers seldom showed themselves interested in the doings of servants.

The second Hackenschmidt-Madrali match at Olympia brought me in touch for the first time with Mr. F. H. Payne, known to many Londoners as " Pa " Payne. He was managing director of a new company which had taken over Olympia. The place built to be an agricultural hall had for a long time been a " white elephant." For some reason the cattle show scheme was never carried through ; and, as far as I remember, the building was opened by the company of the Paris Hippodrome, and they gave a circus show of a quality which I don't think has since been equalled, and certainly never excelled. But the seating arrangements made the place difficult to utilise except for big arena shows, and they naturally were not numerous. Then " Pa Payne " had an idea. He installed movable seating which could be packed up and arranged according to the occasion. Next he went out to secure, as permanent fixtures at Olympia, the Military Tournament, which hitherto had been held at the Agricultural Hall, and the Motor Show, which had not before been possible at Olympia, owing to the permanent seating. The adaptable seating was first used in the Hackenschmidt-Madrali match, and afterwards my plan of alphabetical blocks and numbered seats—the colour of the tickets corresponding with the colour of the plan—was adopted for the Military Tournament. This plan with variations has been used since at all arena shows at Olympia.

Mr. Payne very successfully filled up most of the time with Trade Exhibitions in addition to the Horse Show and the Motor Show ; but had difficulty in finding an attraction for the Christmas period. The first year he arranged with the late Ned Cleary to put on a Sports Show. A huge grass mat, which covered the area, was made, and Cleary's idea was to hold attractive indoor football matches. There were tennis courts, and a team of Pelota players was brought from the Basque country. The cost of the Pelota courts was in itself an enormous item of expense ; but this wonderful game—the quickest ball game in the world—did not seem to catch the imagination of Londoners. Cleary

engaged certain veteran professional footballers, like M'Innes, of Nottingham Forest; but he found it impossible to secure any of the league clubs to play on the grass carpet, and the whole show was a fiasco. It was a pity; it was a good idea which somehow went wrong.

I first met Ned Cleary in New York about 1892. He had taken over the beautiful wordless play *L'Enfant Prodigue*, which had been an enormous success in London. But it was a financial failure at Daly's Theatre, New York. Cleary told a story about a spectator who had a seat in the back row one night, and bought another for an ensuing performance, because he had not heard what the actors said.

Cleary, a popular member of the Savage Club, was one of the most amusing raconteurs I have known. He had done many things—built railroads in Africa, run opera and a circus in South America, and during the South African War he acted as war correspondent for the *Daily Express*. Just before he died he owned an invention which might have made him rich.

During Cleary's winter show I put up to " Pa " Payne the idea of an annual Fair and Circus at Olympia on the lines of the World's Fair at the Agricultural Hall. He offered me the building for the purpose, and a young man about town, Bertie Rose, of the firm of E. J. Rose & Co., who had wine shops all over London, took a financial interest in the venture. I remembered Rose telling me at the Eccentric Club that, when the Barnum & Bailey show was on at Olympia, his father had bought a public-house opposite the Blythe Road entrance, solely on the enormous figures shown during the circus period. Since then the business had been bad. My proposed Fair at Olympia seemed likely to bring back trade, and it was an excuse for his firm to support me.

I found no difficulty in filling up the big building with roundabouts, cocoa-nut shies, and the usual attractions of the Fair ground. I engaged a menagerie, and started to organise a circus. The Cirque de Paris had just been opened by a man named Irlicht, a dentist, who had married a

circus artist, a pretty and charming woman. The Irlichts provided the horses and the nucleus of the troupe, which I supplemented with other acts. I coined the title of the " Mammoth Fun City," and since then Fun City has been used for aggregations of Fair attractions all over the world. I endeavoured to make the Fair international, and with that end in view visited several of the French Fairs. I actually entered into a contract with the celebrated " La Goulue " to bring her *baraque* to London, with its remarkable façade painted for her by Toulouse Lautrec. When her star waned as a leader of the notorious Moulin Rouge Quadrille, " La Goulue " adopted the profession of lion tamer, and garbed herself in a leopard skin. The Lautrec paintings on the front showed her in her heyday as a dancer, and again as a *dompteuse*. But " La Goulue " broke her contract with me, and did not come to Olympia. During the war she made fitful appearances at an outlying music-hall of Paris—by this time she was stout and far from attractive to look at. Then she was reported to be dead. But recently she was found living in a caravan on the outskirts of Paris, selling bon-bons to make a living.

I also engaged a troupe of wrestlers, a traditional feature of the Paris Fairs. Their bombastic challenges from the platform have always been a source of intense amusement to me. Only recently I spent an afternoon at the Montmartre Fair and, coming across a wrestling *baraque*, was pleased to find an old friend in tights and trunks, ready to take on all comers. He was described by the " *barker* " as " The Champion of France," and for all I know the title may have been correct. I remembered him as a one-time member of my troupe at the London Pavilion—a handsome athlete, named Emil Vervet. Now he is a mountain of flesh. Next to Hackenschmidt, Vervet, I think, was the most popular foreign wrestler who ever appeared in England. Whenever he was a contestant there was a good house. Standing at the back of the crowd I tried to catch Vervet's eye. But

he did not recognise me, and thought only that I was accepting his challenge. Imagine my embarrassment when the gage—a piece of stuffed material, sausage-shaped, about 6 inches long—was thrown to me. I had to explain that I did not want to wrestle, and was the subject of a good deal of amusement to the crowd.

I was anxious that my Fun City should include a Richardson's Show or Mumming Booth, and I arranged with Fred Karno to do this. Karno found an old mummer whose father had been with the original Richardson, and he had followed the traditional business in other mumming booths, which still bore the name of Richardson, after the famous old showman's death in November 1836. Karno's troupe played the *Murder of Maria Martin in the Red Barn*, which was of a later date than the original Richardson Show, and other blood-curdlers. He also made the band appear in old-fashioned toppers, and gathered together an excellent lot of "paraders," including the veteran clown, Harry Paulo—I have an old woodcut which shows the name of Paulo over the Richardson Show at Bartholomew Fair. One day Lionel Brough, the comedian, was walking through the Fun City with me, and Paulo recognised him. Years before Paulo had fallen from a trapeze at the Westminster Aquarium, and Brough had picked him up and carried him to a dressing-room. Among others who played in the original Richardson Show were Edmund Kean, Oxberry and Jem Wallack, a descendant of whom founded Wallack's Theatre, New York. Richardson left £40,000 when he died. He is buried in the churchyard at Great Marlow. He was a "penny showman"; but it was said that his scenery and wardrobe were better than those of the Theatres Royal of the time, and the acting in his show was uncommonly good. The best description of Richardson's is to be found in Pierce Egan's "The Pilgrims of the Thames in Search of the National."

Karno had known the mumming booths, although he was, of course, too young to remember Richardson. But he worked the fairs, doing what is known as a "perch

Caricature of Charles B. Cochran at the time of Hagenbeck's Wonder Zoo and Big Circus at Olympia, by Charles Taylor (Cee Tee)

act " for many years before the mumming booths and the " ghost " shows gave way to cinema shows with their gaudy fronts and coloured electric lights. The " ghost " shows were wiped out when every village got its stationary picture theatre. The Fair in England now is, practically, all rides and games.

In Biddall's Menagerie, which I engaged for the Fun City, was a little hump-back Indian bull. In the ordinary way he was no great feature of Biddall's show; but I had an idea, and begged the old menagerie proprietor to allow me to make a side show of him.

I had a booth in the style of an Indian temple erected, and engaged two Cingalese, dressed in native costume, to attend the bull. I had his hoofs gilded, and some elaborate Indian tapestry was put across his back. Indian rugs and hangings decorated the walls of his habitation; his food and drink were placed in golden vessels; incense was burned; and the Cingalese, at intervals, chanted in their native tongue. He was advertised as the Sacred Bull of Benares.

At intervals, when a large crowd had collected, the Cingalese would close the curtains and the " *barker* " in charge would announce to the crowd that the sacred animal was performing rites which no Christian could see.

I have to confess it—this little " stunt " proved one of the hits of the show, and perhaps received more publicity than all the other attractions put together. It was through this bull that I first met James Douglas, whose articles in the *Sunday Express* are now a feature of London journalism. He was then on the *Star*. In a book he published about that time he wrote an amusing story about the Bull of Benares and myself. The bull was a free show, used mainly for purposes of publicity.

We had one side show at which we made considerable money—that was " Sacco," the Fasting Man, who undertook to beat his previous record of going forty-eight days without food, living in a sealed glass house on water only. He accomplished his task by fasting fifty-two days.

I will admit that no special watch was kept on Sacco. Therefore I am not in a position to say how far his feat was genuine. But he assured me that it was, and the night firemen at Olympia told me they never discovered any sign of food being brought to him, although they were glad enough to act as spies merely to vary the monotony of their night watches. I do know that he entered his voluntary prison a healthy-looking man, and emerged a living skeleton.

Towards the latter part of this fast, a letter appeared in the *Lancet*, attacking the exhibition. It was followed by denunciations in the lay papers describing the show as degrading and unwholesome.

One of the gentlemen, financially interested with me, came to me under the stress of a wigging from his wife, who had read these articles. He would not, he said, be a party to anything so opposed to public taste and morals. The exhibition must cease. I saw at once a fine chance for *réclame*. "We must ascertain our legal position," I told my colleague. "We have rented to Sacco the premises he is occupying, and we might find ourselves involved in an action for illegal trespass if we attempted to turn him out." My friend, who was a Scotsman and a cautious business man, agreed that there was something in what I said, and consented to my seeing our solicitor, Mr. Amery Parkes.

Mr. Parkes read the contract, and came to the conclusion that we had no right to interfere with Sacco's peaceful possession of the premises. He was committing no illegal action in abstaining from food. Mr. Parkes advised that I might serve Sacco with a notice to quit, but if he refused, and we attempted to force an entry, it would be at our risk.

So a letter was written, and I allowed it to be whispered around Fleet Street that it would be presented to Sacco at a certain hour. I informed Sacco what was to happen, and arranged with him to secure a solicitor to be present. I chose a Saturday afternoon about five o'clock, when the building was full. Meanwhile Sacco had barricaded the glass door in his glass prison.

Followed by a few newspaper men, my nervous colleague, and a small batch of friends, I walked up to Sacco's glass house. I placed against the window for him to read from the inside a notification that unless he desisted from his fast, and yielded up the premises, I should have to make entry by beating down the door.

Sacco responded with a reply scrawled on a piece of paper, which he placed against the glass on the inside. He said he held the premises under an agreement, and the penalty of the law would be upon our heads if we interfered with him.

" Very well, then," I said, " I must take the law into my own hands. I will not assist a human being to commit self-murder." Behind me was a page boy with a hatchet. " Break down the door," I said to him.

Just then there stepped forward the solicitor engaged by Sacco. He told us that heavy damages might result if we persisted in interfering with his client. His arguments visibly affected my Scotch friend. Mr. Amery Parkes, who was present, agreed that Sacco's solicitor was talking sound law, and as Sacco's daily takings were very considerable, and decidedly on the increase, we might find ourselves mulcted in heavy damages.

The large crowd, which had gathered, listened eagerly to everything which was said. Finally, my friend was persuaded, as I determined he should be, to raise no further objections to the continuance of the fast. I pleaded with Mr. Amery Parkes, but in the end allowed myself to be convinced, and, turning to one of our party, said, " Well, we have done our best, but if the man wants to kill himself we cannot interfere."

The immediate result was a flood of publicity for Sacco, and a rush to see him. The entrance fee was raised from 6d. to 1s., then to 2s. 6d., and on the day that he broke his fast to 5s.

Only those who cater for the amusement of the public can have any idea how difficult it sometimes is to please them with really meritorious and interesting performances,

and how easy sometimes with showman's trickery. An exhibit at the Fun City, of which I was genuinely proud, was a collection of pygmies from the Ituri Forest; they had been discovered and brought to this country by General Harrison, at great risk and expense, for purely scientific reasons. They hardly drew their electric light bill. On the other hand, Sacco coined money, and the Bull from Benares was never without a crowd round his kiosk.

I also engaged Tom Burrows, the club swinger, to attempt to break his record for continuous club swinging. This he accomplished, and let me say legitimately, as he was closely watched night and day at Olympia. For forty-nine hours he never ceased to swing his clubs. It still appears to be one of the most amazing feats of endurance ever accomplished, although, like most endurance tests, a waste of valuable energy. Burrows was so conscientious that, I believe, had a committee not been appointed to watch him day and night he would not have taken advantage of the fact. He gloried in his achievement.

I remember sitting up one night with Mr. J. M. Dick, and one or two others. We all dozed occasionally, but never for more than a few minutes. Burrows would waken us and admonish us, saying the only thing that worried him was to see us falling asleep. When he was swinging his Indian clubs he liked to chat all the time. His wife fed him at intervals with a spoon.

When I was at Newcastle with Zbysco, the wrestler, I heard there was a very successful roller-skating rink in the city, and went to see it. I had not heard of roller-skating in England for many years, and I was much struck with the way the place was run, and by its evident popularity. I found that the proprietors were Messrs. Crawford and Wilkins, and that their headquarters were in Liverpool. So to Liverpool I went, and found there an even bigger and more popular rink.

I hunted up Mr. C. P. Crawford, who was the son of the proprietor of a chain of theatres I knew of in Missouri and Kansas. Companies always dodged them if possible;

but sometimes one had to play them to break journeys going West. In the profession the circuit was known as "the death trail," as so many touring companies got stranded while playing on it, owing to the bad business. However, C. P. Crawford was a keen American showman, who had come to Liverpool, as he put it himself, with a suit-case and 1000 dollars. He promoted his first rink in Liverpool with local capital, and in a few months had paid the shareholders 100 per cent. He then started in Newcastle, and contemplated branching out in all the big towns.

I asked him why he did not come to London, and he said he had not been able to find a suitable building at satisfactory terms. I suggested Olympia, and he replied he would be happy to take it if he could get it on a long lease. This, I told him, was impossible. He told me he could not see how he could get his money back and make a profit in so short an Xmas season as from eight to ten weeks, which was the only period during which Olympia would be available. Still I talked him into consideration of the project, got him to figure out the cost of laying his floor, and what the running expenses would be, and finally persuaded him that the venture could be made profitable. The very size of Olympia, and the possibilities of advertising it as the greatest skating rink in the world, would, I convinced him, draw numbers which would make his Liverpool and Newcastle successes very small in comparison.

I introduced Mr. Crawford to Mr. Payne; a contract was entered into, and the success of Olympia as a roller-skating rink was never in doubt. It caught the imagination of the public, and London went roller-skating mad. Much of the credit was due to "Pa" Payne, who with my assistance and that of Mr. Giraud Wright, the secretary of White's, founded a Sunday Skating Club, with a membership that embraced all the well-knowns in the smart Bohemian society of those days.

Crawford's success, in promoting roller-skating in England, brought to this country Col. Winslow, head of

the Winslow skate manufacturing firm. He had paid Crawford's original expenses to this country, and had an interest in all the rinks he had established. But the success of Messrs. Wilkins and Crawford tempted all sorts of people to try rink promotion, and soon the thing was overdone, and many rinks failed, mainly due to bad management, careless selection of sites, and over-capitalisation. The Crawford and Wilkins' rinks were splendidly managed; but they felt the opposition which sprang up against them. Crawford had taken sites and had started to build rinks, not only all over the United Kingdom, but in France, Germany, and Holland as well. The success of his early promotions enabled him to raise with ease the money necessary to construct the rinks. But when "the boom" was overdone, and the rinks began to go "bust," and people to lose their money—and there were scandals, too, caused by married women running off with handsome skating instructors—then the whole business got a bad name. Crawford had found it so easy to turn over his acquisitions to companies, that he and Wilkins had made themselves responsible for land and building contracts all over the place. When the distrust of skating-rink enterprises set in, they found it difficult to raise the money for building purposes, and became involved in a financial mess. Winslow was anxious above all to maintain the confidence of the public in roller-skating; and with this end in view he made a personal inspection of all the rinks here and on the Continent, and then started a reconstruction scheme, for which he found considerable additional capital. He appointed me managing director of his rinks on the Continent. They included two in Paris, one each in Berlin, Hanover, Hamburg, Antwerp, and Nice. He gave me full authority to do what I liked with them—sell them, close them if their chance of returning a profit appeared hopeless, or run them.

When I assumed the managing directorship of the Continental Skating Rinks I made a tour of them, and decided that Berlin should be my headquarters; it seemed to me

that the German rinks needed most attention. From the structural point of view, the best rink had been built in Berlin ; it was in the residential district, at the extreme end of Kurfurstendam. The Berliners were mad about ice-skating, and they took quickly to roller-skating. But their roads were so splendidly made that they skated in the open road without coming to our rink and paying entrance money. And by a stroke of irony the best bit of road went past our rink—hundreds of skaters used to go flying past our almost empty building. A few English and Americans were the only people who came in.

In Hanover we had an unpretentious building in the centre of the town, and it had a tremendous financial success. In Hamburg, also, the rink was a success during the first season. I tried in every way, short of giving them free tickets, to get the Berliners to come to the Kurfurstendam rink, but could not persuade them. Even when they did come with their free tickets they complained of our charges for food and beer. We had a splendid restaurant, without which no form of entertainment can pay in Germany.

Only once was I successful in packing the place for a week. I offered prizes for the most beautiful girl who came to skate that week. Everybody paying for admission had the right to vote. The competition filled the rink daily, and at the end of the week the prize was gained by an English girl named Olive Atkinson. The majority of the voters did not know she was English, because she was a member of Kaufman's Cycling Girls, who were playing at the Winter Garden. The decision was arrived at quite fairly, but proved unpopular, and was attacked in the Berlin press, which had helped the competition enormously. From that time on I was never again successful in getting large crowds to the rink. I tried every sort of competition, but without success.

I had the management of two rinks in Paris—one in the Passy quarter in the Rue St. Didier, the other the old Hippodrome in the Boulevard Clichy. Curiously enough,

the St. Didier rink over a long period was the most successful I have known ; yet it was the most difficult to promote. Nobody in Paris believed in it. The money was subscribed many times over for the Hippodrome ; but it was difficult to get any for the St. Didier. Old residents said that Parisians would not go away from the amusement district.

All our rinks were run on very strict lines. Our theory was that respectability was the main asset of a rink. The success of a rink run on free-and-easy lines would, if it had success at all, be ephemeral. The money for the Hippodrome rink was mostly subscribed by Englishmen in business in Paris. They believed that " the girls " were essential to any amusement resort in Paris. The Board of Directors was made up of several Englishmen with a financial interest in the concern, and I very soon found that their policy was different from mine—so I resigned my managing directorship. My policy, I may say, was actuated entirely by business, not moral, motives. The Hippodrome was a new toy for Paris, and for a brief time was very gay. The Promenade was thronged with girls ready to drink a cocktail or skate with any man who came along. At the St. Didier rink, strict decorum was observed. Any unattended lady was watched, and, on the slightest evidence that she was not there to skate, it was made known to her that her presence was not wanted. Soon a splendid clientele was worked up—not only English and American residents—French ladies began to bring their children, and these are the patrons who make skating pay, because they come day after day. First they take lessons to enable them to go round alone. Having acquired some kind of proficiency, they are not satisfied until they can waltz and do all the other things which make skating attractive. It is only when they have accomplished everything possible that they begin to tire.

The life of a well-conducted skating rink is about three years. The St. Didier ran four, and was then sold at a good price for tennis. It is now, I believe, a garage.

The Hippodrome lasted only a few months. Paris amusement seekers are fickle, and when the novelty of skating wore off the Montmartre crowd sought other means of amusing themselves. The people who went to the St. Didier rink would as soon have thought of going to the Hippodrome as a French lady would think of going unattended to the Abbaye de Thélème.

Another paying rink was in Antwerp. It was in a ramshackle building, which cost us so little that in a few weeks the subscribers had their capital returned. Tempted by our success, some local people put up rather an elaborate building. It was beautifully appointed; but the floor was atrocious, and skaters after trying it returned to our rink. This incensed the shareholders, and it happened that the chief financial interest was held by a relative of the Burgomaster. It was not long before I received notice that our poor old building must be closed, because as a place of public amusement it was unsafe.

I was in Berlin when this news reached me, and immediately I took the train for Antwerp. On the train I got into conversation with a gentleman whose name was Van Dyck. He was a brother of the famous tenor, and a most influential man in Antwerp. I told him why I was hurrying to his city. He was amused and indignant, and he gave me advice. There was a newspaper, he told me, which persistently attacked municipal graft. He advised me to call on the proprietor and take some advertising space, to tell him of the notice that had been served on me, and to give him a list of the shareholders of the new concern. I followed his advice, and the day following the paper came out with a violent attack upon the Burgomaster and his clique. It proved that practically everybody who was instrumental in condemning the old rink was financially interested in the new one. The matter became town talk. A comic scene referring to the episode was introduced into a local revue, and the result was electric. A city surveyor called on me. It was obvious he wanted a bridge on which to climb back. He said the

authorities were loath to inflict so great a hardship on the shareholders as to close the building entirely ; if we would do certain minor repairs—infinitesimal matters—the order to close would be rescinded. This ended the episode. I had reason to be eternally grateful to Mr. Van Dyck.

I had another experience with the local authorities at Hamburg. The ground upon which the rink was built belonged to the Government. When our company leased it, the Government insisted upon a clause which would enable them to give us six months' notice to pull down our building, should the ground be wanted for military purposes. The officials had assured Messrs. Crawford and Wilkins when they made the arrangement that there was only a remote possibility of this notice being exercised for several years. When I took over control I tried hard to get this clause struck out, but the official at the Rathaus, who dealt with the matter, told me it was impossible, under Government regulations, to let the ground without this restriction. He again assured me, however, of the improbability of a mere six months' notice being given. Out of courtesy he said they would give me at least a year—probably two or three years. I made it my business to keep very friendly with this official, who had great power ; in fact I was invariably friendly with the police and other officials in all the cities where we had rinks.

My friend at the Rathaus was a most interesting person, with a violent hatred of the Prussians, and a genuine admiration for the English. I felt fairly confident that so far as his good offices went the rink was safe. However, the Hamburg rink had a preponderance of Hamburg capital, mainly secured by a local outside broker or, as he styled himself, banker. This gentleman was anxious that I should retire from the managing directorship, and that he should take control, because he said that as he was a local man the Government would never take advantage of the clause in the contract. I asked my friend at the Rathaus if the position would be stronger if I retired. He had a perfect hatred of this broker, I found, and of all

Jews. He assured me that the moment I had nothing more to do with the rink notice would be given for the place to be pulled down. Although I did not actually report this conversation to my broker friend, I intimated that I was on such friendly terms with the authorities that I thought we might leave well alone. He ridiculed the idea of my having any influence that could possibly be greater than his, and eventually he made so satisfactory an offer to buy out the interest which I represented that I accepted, and he assumed control. The week after the transaction was completed he received notice to pull down the building. Protests were of no avail, and the building did indeed have to come down.

CHAPTER XVIII

The 100 Dwarfs at Olympia—Countess Magri and Queen Victoria—General Tom Thumb as Lover—The Dwarf who was kept in a Mayfair House for Two Days—My First Experience as Boxing *Entrepreneur*—Peter Jackson in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*—A Degenerate Haunt in New York—George Robey's One Appearance in America—My First Memory of Elsie Janis—Anna Held and the Bath of Milk.

WHILE the Main Hall was being used as a rink, I arranged with "Pa" Payne and C. P. Crawford to run the Olympia annexe with some sort of a show on the lines of the Fun City. I realised, however, that a small Fun City would compare unfavourably with the Fun City of the previous year, which had occupied the main building as well as the annexe. It was obvious that I must introduce some special feature.

Well, I hit upon the idea of a Midget City, and gathered together about 100 dwarfs, whom I housed in a miniature town with tiny shops, a tiny theatre, a tiny circus, a tiny fire station, and a tiny police station.

I advertised the Midget City as "Tiny Town," and before we opened I created some stir by giving forty of the little people dinner at the Savoy at a huge circular table which was placed in the centre of the restaurant. I had not told the Savoy people who my guests were to be, and next day my party was town talk.

The most interesting inhabitant of Tiny Town was the Countess Magri, who formerly was Mrs. General Tom Thumb. With her were her husband, Count Primo Magri—he was said to have received his title of nobility from Pope Pius IX.—and his brother, Baron Ernesto Magri.

The little Countess was an extraordinary creature. She

was of New England stock, and was born in Middleboro', Mass. Her maiden name was Lavinia Warren. She prided herself upon her English ancestry, and assured me—who have little knowledge of tables of descent—that she could trace her descent from William, Earl of Warren, who married Gruneda, the daughter of William the Conqueror. She had, if I remember rightly, four brothers and sisters, all nearly six feet in height; but there was another young sister, Minnie, and she was a dwarf. Minnie married another dwarf called Major Newell. The poor little creature died in giving birth to a child. The Major afterwards married an English woman of ordinary size. He lived to be sixty, and had two children by his wife.

The Countess Magri had the Puritan outlook of a true New Englander. She was prouder than anything else of having been received by Queen Victoria. The old lady—she was well over sixty years when she was with me—modelled her dress on that of Queen Victoria. One day my wife went to visit her in her little house at Olympia. A very popular musical comedy actress, who was rather made up, went with her. The Countess's reception was most frigid, and afterwards she asked my wife why she had brought such a person to see her. "Professionally, I see anybody," she went on; "but not on terms of friendship, as I meet you." My wife exclaimed that the friend she had brought was a very well-known actress; and a charming woman besides. The Countess replied acidly that she would accept my wife's assurance as to the visitor being a charming woman, but she did not want to know actresses.

Apart from this rather narrow-minded view of life, the little lady was enormously intelligent. Describing a luncheon at which he met her, James Douglas wrote that when he was introduced he felt some sense of pity; but, after he had talked with her for a while, he began to think that it was he who was abnormal and to be pitied—her personality was so overpowering. She was a Christian Scientist, and a bad cold she caught at Olympia occasioned

me much alarm, because I could not persuade her to see a doctor or to take ordinary precaution. She went regularly to the Christian Science Church.

She talked a great deal about her first husband, General Tom Thumb. She had the greatest respect for his memory, although she had become quite devoted to her husband the Count.

Like Tom Thumb, she was discovered by Barnum, who had exhibited her with Commodore Nutt in New York. Barnum is reputed to have made £150,000 by exhibiting Tom Thumb in Europe. At the old Egyptian Hall, in Piccadilly, the receipts were £600 a day. On the other hand, Benjamin Haydon, the historical painter, who was exhibiting his latest work, "Nero Playing while Rome is Burning," took £17 in a week. Haydon was so depressed that he cut his throat. In these times not even the genius of a Barnum could draw £600 a day by exhibiting a dwarf.

When Lavinia Warren appeared at Barnum's Museum in New York Tom Thumb was living somewhere in Connecticut, amusing himself by yachting and driving his beautiful ponies. One day, happening to visit New York, he called on Barnum, met Lavinia, and immediately fell violently in love with her. He pleaded with Barnum to say a good word for him with the little lady. Barnum refused, and said he must do his own courting. He also warned him that he had a rival in Commodore Nutt.

Tom Thumb was a believer that "faint heart ne'er won fair lady," and started his wooing with plenty of confidence. He was a rich man of leisure, whereas his rival, Commodore Nutt, had to be on exhibition in the Museum all day long. The General moved from his country house to New York, and persuaded Barnum to invite Lavinia Warren to spend a week-end at Barnum's home in Bridgeport. Barnum did so, but also asked Commodore Nutt to join the party when his duties were finished at the Museum.

Tom Thumb met Barnum and Lavinia with his carriage and pair at Bridgeport Station, and drove them to Barnum's

COMMODORE NUTT. GENERAL TOM THUMB. LAVINIA WARREN. MINNIE WARREN.

THE FAIRY WEDDING GROUP

Autographed by the four parties on the back of the photograph, and presented to Charles B. Cochran by Mrs. Tom Thumb, Grace Church, New York, 10th February 1863.

house. Nor was he backward in talking about his attractive house and estate. He also brought his mother to dine at Barnum's house, and he let Barnum know that he must propose to Lavinia while she was at Bridgeport. Barnum said that after dinner he would go to bed early; but some one must stay up for Commodore Nutt, who would be arriving by the last train. Tom Thumb promptly said that he would sit up with Lavinia. Barnum was thinking of taking Lavinia to Europe. Tom Thumb told her that it would be nice if they could go together, as he knew Europe well, and could make it more agreeable for her. He felt sure that Barnum would engage him if he wanted to take up his professional occupation again. On his previous visit he had been presented to practically all the crowned heads and notability of Europe. Well, before Commodore Nutt arrived, the General had proposed and been accepted. The poor little Commodore was heartbroken when he learned what had happened. It was often said that he married Lavinia's sister, Minnie; but that was not so. The Countess Magri told me that the Commodore's disappointment when she married Tom Thumb was so great that he took to drink and dissipation in various ways, so that when he proposed to Minnie she refused him.

Barnum made a lot of money out of General and Mrs. Tom Thumb and Commodore Nutt and Minnie when he exhibited them in England. It must not be thought that the midgets did not get their share of the spoils. Tom Thumb was a good business man, and at one time was quite rich; but when he finally retired he spent so much money on horses, jewellery, yachts, and the other good things of life, that he left his wife with a comparatively small income. She told me, however, when she was with me, that she had sufficient to live comfortably for the rest of her life. One thing she found was that there was no such thing as privacy for her. She tried retirement in her old home, only to find that every stranger who visited the town came to her house and asked to see her; she was followed in the streets and pointed out as a curiosity wherever she went.

She found exhibition life more bearable than private life. She had one child, who died when two and a half years old.

Although devoted to her husband, the Count Magri, she was not pleased with her brother-in-law, Baron Ernesto. She complained that when they were in Paris he flirted with the nurse girls in the Bois, and that he was too fond of talking to the girls at Olympia ; sometimes, too, he got rather tight.

We had another interesting dwarf in Tiny Town, a Hindu, named Smaun Sing Hpoo. He was an amazing gymnast, and his act on the rings was as fine as any I have seen accomplished by a full-grown performer. One day at Olympia we lost him, and he could not be found for forty-eight hours. A beautiful young woman had thought it would be amusing to take him home. She had smuggled him out to supper after Olympia closed one night, and had kept him in her Mayfair home for two whole days. His account of his two days of riotous living with champagne suppers and almost indescribable orgies was something not to be forgotten. His impressario, a very nice man, who had a genuine affection for the little creature, was almost demented until I found Smaun.

I cannot pass over my experience with midgets without recounting the following story.

Senator Reynolds, the late George Considine (a well-known American sportsman, proprietor with his brother of that famous Broadway rendezvous, the Hotel Metropole), and Rodriguez, my old friend of the Mansfield days, organised a midget city for Dreamland, Coney Island. Rodriguez wrote me asking for some new and appropriate attraction. I cabled back, "Would you like performing fleas?" He replied, "Stop your kidding ; seriously we want an attraction." I cabled that in my young days troupes of performing fleas were very common, and although I had not seen any lately I was pretty certain that I could dig one up. His American partners were delighted with the idea, and authorised me to go ahead.

I remembered that performing fleas were a stock attraction at the old Westminster Aquarium, and I felt sure that Harry Wieland (the husband of the famous Zaeo, who had her back inspected by the L.C.C., making that comparatively new governing body world-famous) would be able to get what I wanted. And, indeed, Wieland brought to me the man who had shown the fleas at the Aquarium. He was a Scotsman named Stewart. He had retired, and, possessed of considerable property in Glasgow, was living on his rents. He agreed, however, for 125 dollars a week to get together a troupe of fleas, train them, and take them to America. The contract was entered into, and Stewart crossed the Atlantic with his charges. I chanced to be in New York just before the Coney Island season opened. The papers were full of stories of the performing fleas; scientific and humorous writers were turned on to the subject. It appeared that performing fleas, a familiar sideshow in England, were unknown in America.

On the opening day of Dreamland I went to Coney Island. I found a great crowd seeking the performing fleas; but the show was not open. Meeting Stewart, I asked him why he was missing such a great crowd on the opening day. He was very depressed, and told me he could not get the fleas to work. Two or three of them had died, and the rest seemed inert. He took me into his booth, which had a wonderful painted front, and showed me the fleas. There was not a jump left in them. He put down their sad condition to the insect powder used on the ship. Next day all the fleas were dead. I urged Stewart to get some more. He said he had been trying, but had not succeeded. I suggested that we should call on some of the cheap lodging-houses. In a likely looking row of wooden shanties we saw a fat negress sweeping down the steps. I gave her a dollar bill, and told her there would be another for each dozen fleas she could collect alive in a little match-box. "Nevah seen a flea heah, Mistah; but if some nice fat healthy bed bugs will do I can get you all you want."

We searched high and low, but found that the flea did not exist in New York or its vicinity. Discussing this at Considine's Hotel Metropole, we learned that fleas were common enough in California ; and straightway a number of our friends started telegraphing to California for consignments to be sent to New York. In a week's time dozens of boxes of fleas had arrived at the Hotel Metropole, and George Considine and I went off in hot haste to find Stewart. But the old man, dispirited and homesick, had met the skipper of a Leith tramp steamer and had sailed with him the previous day.

I have not told this story of my life in strict chronological order, so it will not seem out of place if I mention that it was some time before this that I first concerned myself with boxing. When the remarkable negro, Joe Walcott, boxed at the National Sporting Club's Coronation Tournaments, I secured him for some exhibitions at the Canterbury. Peggy Bettinson believed that Walcott, although only 10 st. 3 lb., could have fought any man in the world—no matter what his size. He had long arms like a gorilla, and truly was an amazing fighter ; but his exhibition was not very interesting. I then secured Gus Ruhlin, whose fight with Tom Sharkey, the sailor, was one of the greatest heavy-weight contests I ever witnessed. The amount of punishment Sharkey received was more than I should have thought it possible for any human being to stand. At the same time he kept slashing wildly at Ruhlin, but the latter was always master. Sharkey's seconds saved him in the eleventh round. Previously I had seen Sharkey take punishment from Choyinski in California—that was the first big fight I had ever seen.

My first experience in promotion was about this time, when I joined Parson Davies (known best in England as the manager of the great black Peter Jackson) in staging a fight at the Crystal Palace between Denver Ed. Martin and Bob Armstrong. Martin beat Armstrong on points over 15 rounds.

Before this " The Parson "—a most genial American—

MRS. TOM THUMB AT OLYMPIA

had presented Peter Jackson as the hero of *Uncle Tom's Cabin.* I remember seeing one performance in Philadelphia. Jackson was quite a good actor, but artistically it was jarring after Peter had moved the house with " May the Lawd ha' Mercy on My Soul," when he, as " Uncle Tom," was sold to Simon Legree, for Parson Davies to step before the curtain and announce, " Now Ladies and Gentlemen, Peter Jackson will spar three friendly rounds with Joe Choyinski." Then the curtain went up, there was a stage set with a roped arena, and Peter Jackson, his white wig removed, in fighting kit.

I have also seen John L. Sullivan—not a great actor—as *The Man from Boston,* and, of course, Jim Corbett, who played *Gentleman Jim* at Drury Lane, under the management of Bill Brady.

Parson Davies thought of doing *Uncle Tom* in London with Denver Ed. Martin as " Tom." He said he wanted very cheap actors—the worse the better. Arthur Binstead suggested that he should stick a card in the free cheese of the Bedford Street Bodega, " Wanted an entire Co. for *Uncle Tom's Cabin.*" He did so, and was besieged with applications—but the project fell through.

Davies lived at the Adelphi Hotel. One night, about dinner-time, " Gene " Corri and myself were having a drink with him in the bar of the hotel, which was presided over by the popular Mrs. Workman—so long at the Roman's, and now at the Embassy. The " Parson " asked us to join him at dinner. When we went into the dining-room we found it unusually full ; there were just three places vacant, which we took. It became clear to us that we were taking part in a public dinner. We decided to stay. Dinner over, the chairman and the other speakers had a lot to say about a new drainage system. It was the dinner of some society connected with the building industry. Ultimately, the chairman proposed " The Visitors," and called upon the gentleman at the end of the table—he pointed to Davies—to say a few words.

The " Parson " jumped to the occasion. He made an

excellent speech, touched upon the questions raised by the various speakers, and finally explained that we were interlopers by accident. From that moment the "party spirit" reigned. I'm sure most of the diners got home later than their wives expected them to do. As was our custom, we finished at the Tivoli long bar.

During my long stay in the United States I met so many people of interest, and encountered so many sides of life, that it would not be difficult to devote all my space to that part of my life which was spent there.

Whenever I return to New York I look up places—many of them have disappeared—which remain in my memory; places reputable and otherwise; places which perhaps were sordid enough, but now have to me a sort of halo of romance about them.

I can recall exciting nights at Dan M'Guirk's in the Bowery, the Haymarket on Sixth Avenue, and Tom Gould's. The murder of a bar-tender (or was it a murder by a bar-tender—I forget which) the first Christmas morning I was in New York made a great impression upon me, as I had been in the place an hour or so previously. This murder brought about an exposé of New York police methods by the Rev. Dr. Parkhurst, and for some time the New York papers were filled with true stories rivalling any detective fiction that has been written.

Perhaps the most revolting place I remember in those degenerate days was "The Slide," way down-town in Bleecker Street. It was the resort of effeminate young men, many of them of good family, who, with painted cheeks and rouged lips, assumed the names of the popular New York actresses of the moment: Lilian Russell, Della Fox, etc. etc.

Perhaps, too, I am one of the very few Englishmen who saw George Robey make a solitary unannounced appearance at Weber and Field's Music-Hall in New York. It is many years ago. His humour was entirely foreign to the audience, and wisely he returned to England without a further attempt to impress himself upon the American

public. I fancy his sponsor was that quaint character Ted D. Marks, who used to boast that he held a record for transatlantic trips. He imported many Americans to England, and in return took several English performers to New York.

Prior to the establishment of Weber and Field's Music-Hall he ran that famous theatre as " The Imperial." He opened it with a programme almost entirely English; but did not meet with much success. Among the artists in that programme were Miss Adelaide Astor, now Mrs. George Grossmith—she was billed as " Cissie Lind, sister of the great Letty Lind "—Marie Collins, and Elsa Joel, bravura soprano.

Marks was the old type of manager—frock-coated, top-hatted, a big diamond pin in his tie, and always he wore a white chrysanthemum. The only exception that he made to this costume was a yachting cap for the silk hat when he was on board ship. When crossing the Atlantic he had with him sufficient chrysanthemums to last the voyage—they were placed on ice.

I first saw Elsie Janis when she was playing as Little Elsie Janis at one of Ted D. Marks' Sunday concerts in New York.

Ted did not care so much about money as about souvenir gifts. He delighted to show you a watch given him by Yvette Guilbert, a cigarette case from the Sisters Barrison, a diamond pin from Anna Held. He was responsible for bringing out Anna Held, first in New York and then at the Palace, London. She opened in New York with an old-type musical show called *The Parlour Match.* Her fame was begun by a yarn that went through the press of the world. It was said that the beauty of her complexion was due to morning baths in pure milk. Dozens of milk cans were sent to her hotel room. Obviously the question was asked why she needed all this milk. The publicity man did the rest.

The only press " stunt " I can recall, which had a greater effect than this in establishing a star's reputation,

was the widely circulated story about Gaby Deslys and the overthrow of a monarchy.

A story which is still given credence—but has only the slightest foundation of fact—is that which links Cleo de Merode with a certain monarch. I know very well the man who launched this story, on a no more substantial basis than that, visiting the *coulisses* of the Opera in Brussels, the monarch in question paternally patted the head of an extremely pretty dancer.

CHAPTER XIX

The German Theatre—The Revolving Stage, the Most Useful Stage Invention of the Last Twenty Years—The Lighting in *Saint Joan* —First View of *Sumurun* and of the Russian Ballet—The "White-washer" at the London Coliseum—My Meeting with Reinhardt—How *The Miracle* was planned—Finding the "Madonna"—An Amusing Audition—An Agent and his Angry Wife—Mr. W. T. Stead's Proposal—Lord Northcliffe to the Rescue—An Amazing Effect—The New York Production—The Genuine Achievement of Lady Diana Duff-Cooper—Mrs. Cornwallis West and "Shakespeare's England"—A Story of Prince George.

DURING my stay in Berlin I took every opportunity of studying the German Theatre. I realised that a genuine effort towards advancement was being made. I did not consider the general standard of acting very high; but in the best dramatic theatres the productions were always interesting and sometimes extremely fine. Much experimental work was being done as regards lighting and settings. In the production of musical comedies and revues the Germans were then, as I believe they are now, hopelessly behind us. Occasionally individual artists would stand out, but one generally discovered that they were—as in the case of Fritzi Massary—Hungarian or, as with many others, of Austrian origin. The Germans, for the most part, are physically and temperamentally too heavy for the lighter forms of stage work. Their chorus girls I found as grotesque as their taste in decoration and costuming was atrocious. In a few cases considerable money was spent upon musical productions; but it was the taste that was lacking.

Soon I discovered that the most interesting theatres in Berlin were the Deutsches and the Kammerspiele,

both directed by Max Reinhardt. At the Kammerspiele I was intensely interested by a production of Wedekind's *Fruhlingserwarten*. I can remember no other performance at a theatre which gripped me so painfully that I felt I could not stand it any longer. Reinhardt's direction of this poignant play, in the tiny frame of the Kammerspiele, proved him incontestably to be a master producer.

At the Deutsches Theatre I was thrilled most of all by the *Midsummer Night's Dream*, *A Winter's Tale*, and *Faust*. Emil Orlik, with his settings, helped Reinhardt to give what I consider the most beautiful rendering of *A Winter's Tale* I have seen. The simplicity of the Reinhardt production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* was in contrast to the elaborate but far less effective productions I had seen in London. For *Faust* Alfred Roller made wonderful use of the revolving stage, which I have come to believe is, in good hands, the most useful of all the many stage innovations of the last twenty years.

I have not seen better lighting effects from the elaborate Schwabe Hazeit system than those I can recall at the Lyceum in Irving's days, though it is true that, being young, I was not then so critical. But to come right down to to-day I would make comparison with the production of *Saint Joan* at the New Theatre. The very simplest means were employed to obtain the most perfect lighting I have ever seen in any London dramatic production. Of course in the domain of revue we have scaled greater heights.

It remained for me to see *Sumurun*, as presented in Berlin, to become really enthusiastic about the genius of Reinhardt. It gave me supreme delight to stumble quite unexpectedly against something of extreme beauty in a theatre. Only once have I had a more vivid experience; that was the first time I saw the Russian Ballet, with its new and glorious settings by Bakst, the wonderful music of Rimsky-Korsakof, and the remarkable personnel, including Nijinsky, Karsavina, Bohm, Fokine, and Ida Rubenstein,

and the then superb *corps de ballet.* It was in a state bordering upon intoxication that one found oneself in the street after seeing for the first time that incomparable troupe in *Scheherazade, Carnival,* and *The Spectre de la Rose* in one evening.

In many ways I consider *Sumurun* one of Reinhardt's finest achievements. A good deal of the credit must go to Ernst Stern for his costumes and scenery. Unfortunately at this time I had no theatre in London, or most certainly I should have transplanted *Sumurun.* My enthusiasm, however, prompted me to write numerous letters to friends in London. I took a number of the Berlin correspondents of English and American papers to see it, and this resulted in a good deal of publicity in London. Eventually *Sumurun* was seen at the Coliseum, where, although it was an enormous success, it lost some of its original beauty because of the great size of the theatre.

Stern told me an amusing story about the Coliseum production. The scenic artist was sent over from London to duplicate the Berlin scenery. He came back primed with the dimensions, the practicabilities, and the outline of the construction needed; but he was determined to "improve" on the actual painting. "Never," he said, "would they stand in London such scenery as was used in Berlin. He would give them something as beautiful as any Palace scene in any Drury Lane or Manchester pantomime."

On the Sunday before the production Reinhardt arrived for a dress rehearsal. The scenic artist had set up his principal scene, and with pride and assurance he awaited the praise which he felt sure must come from Reinhardt for his "improvement." He had covered what in Berlin were blank spaces with a mass of Oriental design worthy of the best Aladdin's Palace ever seen in a London pantomime. Reinhardt was dumb with horror. He actually wept. Then he became furious, and decided to return immediately to Germany.

Stern, a humorist, as well as one of the most practical

men of the theatre I have ever met, was not so easily nonplussed. "Leave it to me," he said, "and I will make it all right by to-morrow."

Reinhardt protested. But he knew his Stern, and gradually allowed himself to be soothed. All Stern asked for was a bucket of black paint and some whitewash. He spent the night turning the scenes into black and white. To this day at the Coliseum they refer to Stern as "The Whitewasher."

Stern's black-and-white scenery created a sensation. Nearly every critic gave it the praise it deserved. And really it could be looked upon as a pioneer movement in the London theatre towards improvement of stage *decor*.

I think I must have been born with the smell of the sawdust in my nostrils, for always I have had a passion for the circus. Sometimes when making a long journey I have jumped off at a passing station because I have seen a circus tent pitched. I have ridden a hundred miles or more to see, for my own amusement and without any thought of business, some clowns of whom I had heard good report. I remember not long ago insisting that my friend, Peter Page—"Mr. Gossip" of the *Daily Sketch*—should accompany me by motor-car from Paris to Lille in order to see the Fratellini, who promised to do a new entrée specially for me.

Vaguely, subconsciously, I have always felt that the intimacy between the performer and the audience in a circus was lacking in the theatre. As I got older I felt that in Shakespeare's time the playgoers, coming more into contact, as they did, with the players, must have helped to provide that something which often I have felt is lost by the severity of the dividing line of the proscenium arch. I must confess that I had no very clear idea on this subject, but I had noticed how few clowns, so funny in the circus arena, could bear transplantation to a stage. They required the assistance of the audience to take part, so to speak, in their performances.

I felt that this might be the same with drama, and

I wished to experiment. Ever since, as a boy, I had seen one of Kiralfy's big spectacles at Olympia, I had the ambition to do something on heroic lines at Olympia.

One evening, at the Hotel Bristol in Berlin, my friend, the bar tender in that house, which always I made my headquarters, told me that I must go to the Circus Schumann and see Reinhardt's production of *Œdipus Rex*.

I went, and was enthralled. I remember no theatrical effort more realistic than the mob surging into the arena from all sides, and supplicating before the steps of the King's Palace. This I felt was what I had been vaguely thinking about for years, but had never visualised. Later, Reinhardt did *Œdipus* for Martin Harvey at Covent Garden, but it was not the same thing ; the pouring of the people down the aisles of the theatre spoiled the sense of illusion.

I left the Circus Schumann fired with the idea that Reinhardt must produce a spectacle for me at Olympia. But what ? I returned to London and secured an option to rent Olympia for a period from the following Christmas. Then, with plans of the huge Kensington building, I again set forth for Berlin. Calling at the Deutsches Theatre I found that Reinhardt and his troupe were in Budapest. Off to Budapest I went, and on the train I had an inspiration. I saw Olympia as a cathedral. I pictured a great rose window at one end, great columns, mysterious lighting, a rare setting, for a mediæval mystery play.

I arrived in Budapest. Reinhardt's secretary, the Baron von Gersdorff, had prepared Reinhardt for my coming, and at the Hungarian Hotel I found him about to sit down at a large supper-party, at which a place had been kept for me. The party lasted for two or three hours ; then Reinhardt asked me to go with him to a café.

I had with me the plans of Olympia. When I unrolled them, and told him of my project, he was a bit bewildered. The dimensions of the building and the suggested enterprise at first startled him. However, my enthusiasm must have been contagious, for before long he was making suggestions.

Curiously enough, the first idea he had was to reproduce the Durbar. As tactfully as I knew how, I impressed upon him that this was hardly a subject to be tackled in England by a foreigner, and at last I got him to my way of thinking about the mediæval mystery play with the cathedral as a setting.

"But the story," he said; "have you one?"

I had not; my ideas were in the air, but something kept telling me that my instinct was right.

Before we returned home to bed—at about 6 a.m.—Reinhardt had given me a card of introduction to Dr. Karl Vollmöller in Berlin. Back to Berlin I went, where I called on Vollmöller, and in twenty-four hours he supplied me with the first scenario of *The Miracle*. Practically it was the story of the Legend of Provence, showing the life of a nun in the world.

In Berlin, too, I discussed the project with the Brothers Baruch, perhaps the largest firm of providers of costumes, scenery, and theatrical requisites in the world. They were most excited, because hitherto they had done no business with Reinhardt, who was becoming a power in Berlin; also they were anxious to establish themselves in England. They agreed to find half of the capital for the venture if they could have the contract for the *decor*, costumes, and accessories.

When I returned to London the International Horse Show was in progress, and Mr. F. H. Payne, the managing director of the company controlling Olympia, was pretty well occupied. I dined with him at Olympia, and unfolded my project. I had no idea of soliciting financial co-operation from him. I was anxious only to secure the building—I was so enthusiastic about my scheme that I had no fear of not being able to finance it.

To my astonishment Payne told me that, if I could get out of the Baruch arrangement, he had no doubt that his company would find all the capital required. He called a meeting a day or so later, and the suggestion was agreed to: the company was to get half the profits and Payne

and I were to divide the other half. The Brothers Baruch still wanted to participate in the enterprise. I soothed them by giving them the order for all the material required.

Payne and I then set forth to Munich, where Reinhardt was doing *La Belle Helène*, and the contract was signed in the Continental Hotel.

Reinhardt had suggested that Strauss should do the music; but I felt that, for a spectacle which to be commercially successful must appeal to the masses, this would be a mistake. Moreover, the great composer would impose conditions impossible of fulfilment in a building like Olympia, which, in its construction, was deficient in acoustic properties. Reinhardt was more than keen to collaborate with Strauss; but I got his wife (known professionally as "Else Heims") on my side, and together we persuaded him to agree to Humperdinck. With Vollmöller I had seen Humperdinck at his house in the Grunewald, and he had agreed to do the music.

The preparation of *The Miracle* was, perhaps, the most interesting I have ever undertaken.

It brought me in close touch with Ernst Stern, Reinhardt's art director, who designed all the costumes, the accessories and detail work of the cathedral. Cologne Cathedral was taken as a basis for the setting which was to transform Olympia. The actual architectural work was done by Herr Dernberg, a brother of the Colonial Minister when war was declared.

Stern was Rumanian born. I have never known a man of the theatre who was artist and yet practical workman to the same degree as Stern. Difficulties, which would have seemed insuperable to some "producers" I have known, were overcome by the simplest methods. "When in doubt, mask with a little black velvet," he would say. This use of black velvet stuck in my mind, and for my first intimate revue at the Ambassadors' Theatre I used nothing else. Black velvet curtains are now a common background in the theatre. I do not remember them before *Odds and Ends* at the Ambassadors'.

Stern turned out designs with great rapidity. Some two thousand costumes were used, and except for the nuns, there were few duplicates. Belts, shoes, hats, sword buckles—all were designed by Stern, and every property, every accessory, had a separate design. He even had his ideas about the dogs and the horses to be used in the spectacle of the soldiers' homecoming. The horses were mostly piebald, and I remember Stern's delight when I took him one Sunday to John Sanger's winter quarters at Horley, and showed him the very animals his designs called for. An agreement for the use of twenty-five of Sanger's horses was easily come to. The dogs I picked up at Hungerford Market. Sunday after Sunday I went there with Fred Ginnett to search for shaggy-looking animals which had a mediæval aspect. The episode in which the horses and dogs were used was my favourite in the whole spectacle; Humperdinck's March seemed to carry one back to the Middle Ages.

Stern was not content to get colours and details right; he concerned himself tremendously with the cut of the costumes. He made judicious use of buckram to make a cloak or the corner of a hat hang the way he wanted it to do. Everything was a little exaggerated, which, in mass effect, added to the sense of reality. Nearly always theatrical costumes suggest the theatrical costumier, not the actual costumes of the period. After the costumes were made they were painted, under his supervision, to show travel stains and wear. *The Miracle* army recalled an Albrecht Dürer picture.

The Baruch contract for costumes was £12,000. To-day these costumes could not be duplicated for three times that amount. The brothers contracted to carry out the cathedral effect for £8500, and they lost money on the contract. To-day nobody would estimate to do the job in as complete a way for three times the amount.

From the time the contract was signed at Munich in the summer, until the first performance of *The Miracle* on Christmas Eve, I journeyed to and from Berlin practically

every two weeks. As Stern finished his designs I would go over, discuss them, approve them, and then get estimates. Always fresh details for the production were being suggested by Vollmöller and Reinhardt. This necessitated fresh expenses. All the changes had to be discussed before they could be proceeded with, first in Germany with the producers, then in London with the financial forces.

Then there was the cast. We racked our brains to find a nun and a Madonna. For the former rôle all the great pantomimists and dancers were thought of. The majority of them had other engagements, or they did not care to undertake so experimental a venture. One dancer who was most anxious to be engaged—because she knew something of the rare qualities of Reinhardt—was Natacha Trouhanowa. Reinhardt had his doubts of her. But she was so keen she offered to go to Munich from Paris at her own expense, and give Reinhardt a sample of her powers as pantomimist and dancer.

The circumstances of the audition—for such it really was—were almost grotesque. I arrived with her at Munich, after a long and tiring journey from Paris, to find that Reinhardt had moved for the summer to a cottage an hour's ride by car from Munich. He had left word that we must go direct there. We did so. There was not a room in the cottage large enough to swing a cat, so we set out in search of some place where Trouhanowa could give her performance. We asked at a café if we could have a room with a piano. The proprietress, a simple Bavarian woman, looked with amaze at Trouhanowa, who was dressed as if she were setting out for the Grand Prix in an ultra-Parisian raiment—and she was weighted down almost with costly jewels. The proprietress let us know that people of *our sort* were not welcome, so we repaired to Humperdinck's cottage, which was slightly larger than Reinhardt's.

Frau Humperdinck was scarcely more pleased to see us than the café proprietress. However, she said at last that we might use her sitting-room.

Reinhardt, Vollmöller, and myself were rather amused by the situation. Professor Humperdinck's eyes were almost popping through his glasses, while young Humperdinck seemed to have turned white with excitement. Trouhanowa obviously had a great effect upon this young man. It was arranged that he should play the piano.

Trouhanowa retired to the sleeping-room of Professor and Madame Humperdinck. She emerged in diaphanous and costly under-raiment, that filled the simple apartment with perfumes of the Rue de la Paix. The delight of Reinhardt and Vollmöller—I may say my own, too—increased. The perturbation of Frau Humperdinck was barely concealed. More than perturbation—it was concern as to the moral effect of this woman from Paris upon her sainted husband and son.

The plans for Trouhanowa's exhibition were changed. Young Humperdinck was told to go to bed ; the Professor should play and keep his back to the siren.

He played. Trouhanowa gyrated, cavorted, and kicked. At the first kick a picture fell from the wall. The room shook, the household ornaments were in danger. Young Humperdinck's head came through the door. Peremptorily his mother ordered him back.

The performance over, Reinhardt said in German something to the effect that Trouhanowa had been such a sport she must be engaged. No refreshment was offered Trouhanowa and myself by the Humperdincks, though we were starving. We motored miles through the darkness, and arrived in Munich half-dead with hunger and fatigue.

Vollmöller told me the most comical scene of all was after we had left, when Frau Humperdinck found that the clothes of the dancer from Paris had been flung upon her bed. Every window and door in the cottage was opened wide to let in the purifying night air, Madame Humperdinck the while whisking a towel.

Apropos of the engagement of the nun for *The Miracle*, I recall another diverting incident. It occurred one Sunday afternoon in London in the flat of a well-known international

Drawing of Mrs. Charles B. Cochran
by Jean Gabriel Domergue

variety agent. This agent had a wife who had appeared as a Spanish dancer in musical comedy, although her associations with Spain were of a remote character, and not one word of Spanish could she speak.

The agent and myself were discussing various pantomimists and dancers who might be suitable for the part of the nun. Pavlova, Regina Badet, Napierkowska, and others were mentioned. The wife, who had kept silent, suddenly interposed with, " I do not hear you mentioning my name." Quickly the little agent replied, " My darling, do you not understand? This is to be the most wonderful thing ever done. We must have a wonderful artist for the principal part."

A china plate descended, and was broken on the bald head of the agent. He sank to the floor unconscious. I picked him up and got him to bed, where he remained for a couple of days. For some time afterwards his head looked like a railway map, on which was shown a great diversity of main and branch lines.

The selection of the Madonna was also a cause of much anxiety. Reinhardt was anxious to secure Ida Rubenstein, but for some reason this engagement was not possible. One day, in the office of the Deutsches Theatre, Reinhardt, Vollmöller, Dernberg, and myself were sitting round a table discussing plans when Frau Vollmöller, a handsome Italian lady, called for her husband. After an exchange of the usual courtesies, Frau Vollmöller left with her husband.

" There," said I to Reinhardt, " is the Madonna."

" Maybe," he said; " but, unfortunately, she has never acted."

But my suggestion took root; Reinhardt tried Frau Vollmöller in the part, and decided that she should play it. When I was making up the programme I asked her how she would like to be billed. She gave me a list of Italian Christian names, and also a list of Italian towns. I picked " Maria " and " Carmi." Nobody realised, then, that Maria Carmi would make the outstanding personal success of the great venture.

For the Spielman, Reinhardt always had in his mind Max Pallenberg, the famous Viennese comedian, husband of an equally great artist, Fritzi Massary. Pallenberg's performance in *The Miracle* stands in my memory as one of the great things of the theatre: he enveloped it with an atmosphere of eeriness that had in it the touch of genius.

Producing *The Miracle* in the huge bare Olympia building was a Herculean feat. We had nothing but an enormous floor, a great glass roof, the most primitive lighting, and ugly columns and girders which would have to be disguised. We were to produce on Christmas Eve, but could not get possession of the building until 10th December. It was a busy nerve-racking fortnight.

One of the most difficult and expensive effects turned out to be the one failure of the production. That was the Fire Scene in the intermezzo. It necessitated the installation of a huge trap—in itself as big as Drury Lane stage—with elevating machinery and huge fans for the flame effect. From the gallery the effect was marvellous—almost frightening; but from the expensive seats in the centre of the arena the mechanism and the long streamers of silk were obvious.

In a theatre the lighting effects are easy of accomplishment. In Olympia it meant laying miles of special cable; huge lighting bridges had to be built; hundreds of lamps of various kinds had to be bought; and a myriad of electricians employed. And at Christmas-time, with all the theatres full, it was not easy to find men with the practice and experience necessary for controlling lights according to cues. On the night before the production, when the players were tired, I myself, with one of the Baruchs and Mr. George McLellan (brother of the author of *The Belle of New York*, producer of several musical plays in London, and husband of Miss Madge Lessing) posed as the nun, the Madonna, and other characters in *The Miracle* while the electricians, under the supervision of Reinhardt and Stern, practised upon us. Even up to the dress rehearsal it seemed impossible that we could have a smooth per-

formance on the opening night. There were even steam cranes at work in the building.

All the same, the first performance of *The Miracle* was a triumph. It went with amazing smoothness, and there were scenes of real enthusiasm at the close.

Some fifteen hundred people appeared in the spectacle, including a chorus of five hundred voices. The orchestra numbered two hundred. Our salary list was over £5000 a week. To-day it would have to be double that. In those days members of the chorus were satisfied with from £2 to £2 10s. a week for two performances per day, while the minor players averaged about £2 a week. To-day they could not be secured for less than £5.

The press reviews were good, but not sufficiently strong to make the public alive to the superb qualities of the spectacle, and the first receipts were disappointing. Our weekly running expenses were, indeed, slightly in excess of our weekly receipts. We were drawing, perhaps, ten thousand people a day, but we needed twenty thousand.

One Sunday sermons on *The Miracle* were preached in twenty London churches by ministers of various denominations. Ranger Gull, the author of *When it was Dark*, wrote a pamphlet denouncing *The Miracle* as a Popish spectacle. But the bigger public remained uninterested.

Mr. W. T. Stead, who saw an early performance, was anxious to help me. "I can praise it," he said, "like the others have done, or I can attack it." He told me that when he was lecturing he never got a house on the second night unless he had his own heckler to ask questions. He promised to write me two letters, and allow me to choose the one I would like published. The one was a scholarly criticism; the other was as follows:

"*2nd January* 1912.

"DEAR MR. COCHRAN,—I have just witnessed *The Miracle*. But the miracle that impressed me most was the fact that in this Protestant land you were not mobbed by zealous Orangemen. Just think of what you are doing

twice a day this blessed Christmas-tide! Remember the threatened riot which alarmed the Cabinet when it was proposed to take a solemn procession through the streets on the consecration of the new Catholic Cathedral. The Protestant drum was beaten, and the police were seriously asking whether the Guards would have to be called out to prevent a dangerous and possibly bloody affray. Yet that was only one short procession, whereas you, sir, are exhibiting twice every day in the week a gorgeous spectacle with every adventitious aid of music and costume to make the Roman rite attractive to the multitude.

"The other day I received a bulky pamphlet entitled *Rome and Germany*, by Watchman, who proclaimed aloud the existence of an *informal conspiracy got up by Rome and Germany for the destruction of the British Empire.*

"Watchman's evidence was of the slightest. But if he were to bring out a new edition of his pamphlet he would find in *The Miracle* a startling confirmation of his worst surmises. *The Miracle* was 'made in Germany,' and it is a subtle and powerful presentation of the most anti-Protestant doctrines.

"Think, sir, of the effect of this twice-a-day representation of Catholic ritual to eight thousand subjects of our Protestant King, by the hired aid of another two thousand men and women of his Protestant realm who perform the idolatrous rites of Mariolatry, and present in the most attractive fashion the æsthetic lures of the Scarlet Woman.

"Has the great Protestant heart that throbs responsive to the Orange drum ceased to beat? Have you had no protests against this daring challenge thrown down to Protestants' prejudice? I fear that if you present *The Miracle* at Belfast few of your performers would escape without broken heads.

"How much, sir, do you receive from the secret service money of the Vatican or from the coffers of the Jesuits for this imposing and magnificent propaganda in favour of the Roman Catholic Church?

"I write this to you as a friend, and not as one sharing the prejudice of my Orange fellow-citizens.

"As a mere matter of intellectual curiosity I wonder whether they are going to take it lying down.—I am, yours truly, W. T. STEAD."

This was the letter I used. It was published in most London papers, with the exception of the Harmsworth Press, with whom Stead had a feud.

Business improved slowly; but we were losing money. Then along came Lord Northcliffe, and something was indeed accomplished.

During rehearsals Mr. Hamilton Fyfe, the *Daily Mail* special correspondent, now editor of the *Daily Herald*, showed much interest in the production. He helped me in many ways, and I feel under a debt of gratitude to him. At the first performance Mr. Frederick William Wile, then Berlin correspondent of the *Daily Mail*, was most enthusiastic. Then came Lady Northcliffe and Mrs. Harmsworth, Lord Northcliffe's mother. Lady Northcliffe came a second time with Mr. (now Sir) Beach Thomas. She told me she was truly surprised that every seat was not occupied at every performance. She promised to bring Lord Northcliffe to Olympia when he returned from abroad.

Some time went by. Business was creeping up, but we were still on the losing side when Lord Northcliffe came to an afternoon performance. Within an hour of his leaving I had a telephone message from Mr. Hamilton Fyfe. *The Miracle* was to be boomed by the Harmsworth Press.

The next day there appeared a letter in the *Daily Mail*, signed by Hamilton Fyfe; it expressed astonishment that this wonderful spectacle—*The Miracle*—should be playing to only a beggarly array of spectators. Disappointing as the business was, Mr. Hamilton Fyfe's letter represented it to be worse. The letter worried me. If this was the way *The Miracle* was to be made a success, I had rather the *Daily Mail* had left it alone.

The next night Mr. Klaw, the American theatrical manager, sat with me and watched the performance. He was amazed at its beauty, and discussed the project of taking it to New York. "That was a nasty knock you had in the *Daily Mail* to-day," he said. "It's hard lines on you, and I am surprised. To cry 'stinking fish!' is the worst kind of showmanship."

That was the way it had struck me; but I did not know what was to follow. I got my first inkling when next morning a representative of the *Daily Mail* came with a request that I should furnish him with the figures of the attendances at both performances the day before Hamilton Fyfe's letter appeared and that day—the day when the letter appeared. For the first time I sensed what the *Daily Mail* intended, and I will confess now that I was guilty of a deception. Actually business had dropped. At both performances we had taken less money than on the preceding day, and I attributed the slump to the letter. I felt, however, that it would not do to say so. So, while giving the correct figures for the preceding day, I increased the figures for that day.

The charm worked. The next day the *Daily Mail* and all the Harmsworth papers stated that the business of *The Miracle* had increased since the *Mail* had drawn attention to it. I may say that a year afterwards I told Lord Northcliffe what I had done, and his comment was: "You would have been a damned fool if you hadn't." Never did a show have such a press campaign on its behalf as Lord Northcliffe gave *The Miracle*. After the Hamilton Fyfe letter there came leaders, special articles by special writers dealing with the musical side, the art side, the dramatic side, and the religious side of the spectacle. The *Daily Mirror* gave its front and back pages and part of its middle pages to special pictures. Mr. C. P. Little, who did the social notes for the *Daily Mail*, attended every performance, reporting the names of the notables present, just as he did during the Opera season at Covent Garden. The business increased and increased, and each day the *Daily Mail*

published the mounting figures—and after my one deception the figures I gave were the right ones. Within ten days we were turning people away at both performances. Our receipts went up from £5000 a week to £13,000 a week.

I want to add that Lord Northcliffe was inspired to do this generous action solely because of his appreciation of a rare and wondrous spectacle. From what he told me afterwards I think that the organisation of *The Miracle* impressed him more than its æsthetic appeal. On the very day that he began his campaign he sent his advertising manager to tell me that I must send no more display advertisements to any of his papers—I must confine myself, so far as paid advertising went, to the minimum spaces in the ordinary amusement columns. He was emphatic that there must be no suggestion that the boom was in any way influenced by the advertising departments.

When Lord Northcliffe saw *The Miracle*, Trouhanowa and Pallenberg were no longer in the cast. The physical exertion had been too much for them. Both ran some miles on the hard concrete floor at each performance. The nun's rôle was now being taken by a young English dancer—Muriel Ridley—who gave a delightful performance. Lord Northcliffe was especially impressed by it.

As there were fifteen hundred players in *The Miracle*, it is not surprising that constantly I meet actors and actresses who tell me they made their start in it. They are surprised, generally, that I remember them; but I think I knew by name everybody who was in the production. I picked them all. One of the children in the performance was the clever comedienne, Miss Gertrude Lawrence, who captured New York in the Charlot revue. My general manager for many years, Mr. Clive R. M'Kee, was first with me in *The Miracle* as an assistant stage-manager.

The irony of things! It was Lord Northcliffe who made *The Miracle*, and indirectly, and most assuredly against his inclinations, it was the same master journalist who caused us to close with a loss instead of a profit. At the moment when we were turning away thousands, and might have

continued the run for many months, we had to give up Olympia to make way for the *Daily Mail* Ideal Home Exhibition !

I have told of Stern's thoroughness ; but so as not to be misleading I must point out that there were times when he sacrificed accuracy to theatrical effect. In the matter of big spectacles I think he was right. I remember Percy Macquoid, the authority on costumes and furniture, pointing out that the soldiers in *The Miracle* carried crossbows, which would have been out of date, because cannons were drawn in the procession. Stern was aware of the anachronism ; but, as he said, " What are a hundred years or so if you get the effect of the Middle Ages ? "

It was with some emotion that thirteen years later I saw the production of *The Miracle* in New York. It seemed to me that adapting it to the stage of a theatre caused it to lose some of its impressiveness. Magnificently done, as it was, by Mr. Morris Gest, one never got the illusion of being in a cathedral. As in *Œdipus* at Covent Garden, the pilgrims and nuns swarmed down the aisles of the theatre. " It was disturbing," as Mr. George Jean Nathan, the American critic, said in the *American Mercury*, " to see Archie Selwyn and Al. Woods in a procession of nuns ! " This was not unlikely to happen, as in New York the second act started with a procession, and those taking part in the performance were mixed up with spectators who were late in getting to their seats.

My outstanding recollection of the New York *Miracle* cannot but be of Lady Diana Duff-Cooper. I confess to going to the theatre with prejudged opinions because Carmi's " Madonna " at Olympia had seemed to be unapproachable. Lady Diana, as she stood motionless, was exquisite and lovely. When the moment came for her to move I almost trembled with the fear that the illusion would be shattered. But, on the contrary, Lady Diana's every movement, every expression, beautified my conception of the part. She did not seem a creature of this world. Hers was the superb achievement of a genuine artist.

I saw her again as the nun, the part played originally by Trouhanowa. No wonder Reinhardt said that he had found in Lady Diana a really great actress! And he said it in all sincerity. The young nun's struggle with her desires in the early part of the spectacle, her suffering when she went into the world, her humility when she returned to the cathedral, were so beautifully expressed I can imagine no actress in the world surpassing the representation that Lady Diana gave. It stood out as the feature of the New York production that truly caught the spirit and intention of the theme.

I was, I believe, the first person to offer Lady Diana Cooper a theatrical engagement. It was before she did film work. The offer, she told me—it was for the London Pavilion—was a most tempting one financially, and she asked forty-eight hours to consider it.

She turned down my offer. She was not a singer, she said; she couldn't dance well enough for the stage; and she knew from slight experience as an amateur that there were acting technicalities to be overcome. She realised even the difficulty of getting the voice over the footlights.

She understood well enough that her appearance at the theatre might attract audiences through curiosity, and thus would have a financial interest for a manager. But unless she could accept a salary as an artist, she would not attempt an engagement. "And," she added, "to display myself at so much a night in Piccadilly Circus (I have mentioned that it was at the Pavilion that I proposed to present her) might be of detriment to my husband's career."

Mr. Morris Gest furnished a setting of extreme beauty, and the spectacle enthralled, daily, thousands of people. Perhaps I am too human to admire it as much as I did the production at Olympia. But too much praise cannot be bestowed upon Mr. Gest. I know of no other manager in New York who would risk such a production.

The musical side of the spectacle was disappointing. Humperdinck's beautiful score was not treated as sympa-

thetically in New York as in London. During my stay I heard nobody in New York speak of the music. At Olympia it was a vivid factor in the impressiveness of the spectacle. In New York it seemed merely a running accompaniment.

In November, 1912, Reinhardt produced *The Venetian Night* at the Palace Theatre, London. It was a disappointment to the producer and to Vollmöller, the author. Although a failure, I thought it one of the best things Reinhardt had ever done. Before he left London, Reinhardt told me that he would not care to do any more productions in London unless I worked in association with him. As his guest I was present at the first performance of *Der Rosenkavalier* at Dresden, and I was again his guest when he did *Ariadne auf Naxos*, also by Richard Strauss and Hugo von Hoffmannstahl.

I took every opportunity of learning as much as I could from Reinhardt. As a producer he was a fine general, and surrounded himself with very able lieutenants; he had a genius in selecting them. He mapped out his project well in advance, and always had a definite plan when he started rehearsals. I had many opportunities of seeing him rehearse, and I have never seen a *metteur en scène* mould an actor to his will in easier or more pleasant fashion. I have already paid a tribute to Ernst Stern, who was, I think, his most valuable lieutenant. Stern has, I know, been entirely responsible for some productions in Reinhardt's theatres when the professor was engaged elsewhere.

In 1922 I saw at the Grosses Schauspielhaus, Berlin, Offenbach's *Orphée aux Enfer*. I thought it was as bad as *The Miracle* was fine. The huge orchestra completely killed the spirit of Offenbach, and the colouring of the costumes and scenery was hideous. Max Pallenberg, the Spielman of *The Miracle*, gave an admirable performance.

Just before Whitsuntide, 1912, I was approached by a representative of the guarantors to undertake the general management of "Shakespeare's England"—an Exhibition at Earl's Court that had been organised by Mrs. Cornwallis

West (Lady Randolph Churchill), and had been running for some months. Mrs. Cornwallis West had many flashes of genius in the organisation and carrying out of the enterprise, but probably she made the mistake of carrying too much on her own capable shoulders ; and when an exhibition has a wrong start it is hard to put it right.

Although I believe Mrs. Cornwallis West contested my appointment, once it was made she did everything in her power to support me. We became firm friends, and remained so until her death.

I rather think that at the very first she thought to try me when she deliberately countermanded some orders I had given. It was only a small matter of showmanship. As arranged before I came, a certain procession drew people away from the front of the Globe Theatre, where a Shakespeare performance was to be given, instead of drawing them towards it. So I altered the procession. But next day I found that, by instruction from Mrs. Cornwallis West, the performers had resumed the old route. I gave the person in charge to understand that my instructions were always final, and from that time they were not disputed.

When the King and Queen visited the Exhibition, shortly after my appointment, I thought it only fair that I should stand down and allow Mrs. Cornwallis West full credit for the Exhibition which, in most respects, was a tribute to her artistic gifts. She insisted, however, that I should receive Their Majesties with her, and accompany them through the Exhibition. In presenting me, she mentioned that I was responsible for the production of *The Miracle,* and the Queen expressed her regret that Court mourning had prevented her from seeing what she had heard was a very beautiful and impressive spectacle.

It was on this occasion that a certain well-known man gave evidence of that push and determination—that ability to seize the opportunity—which in the end gained him a title and a position in commercial and social circles. He had something to do with the Exhibition—at any rate,

in advertising it. He was away on holiday when he read in an evening paper that the King and Queen were visiting Earl's Court on the following day. Next morning, when I arrived extra early at my office, I found him there—top-hatted, and in a frock coat which he told me he had rushed in and bought at Selfridge's, a " ready-for-service " outfit from head to foot. He had a favour to ask me, he said. It was that he might be near me when I walked with the King and Queen—so that he could be in any photographs that might be taken of Their Majesties. It was a simple request, and I acquiesced by handing him over to the care of Inspector Hawkins of Scotland Yard. And just at the right moment he moved forward and got in the photograph—without showing himself near the detective, either.

During the Exhibition I was once deputed to take Princess Mary, Prince Henry, and Prince George through the sideshows, and on the Scenic Railroad. They enjoyed it all, and, I might add, held on to me when we went down the steep gradients and rounded the curves.

The feature of every successful Earl's Court Exhibition has been the spectacle in the Empress Hall. That year no spectacle had been arranged, so this fine hall was empty save for an occasional ball. This was one of the serious mistakes made when organising the Exhibition. It meant an enormous loss of revenue, and it was a difficult mistake to rectify at short notice. But it was plain that something must be done by the time the August holidays came along. So, satisfying my artistic conscience that a circus might have some association with " Shakespeare's England," I set to work to organise one. First I went to Hamburg, where I got horses from the Circus Busch, then on to Copenhagen and Stockholm ; and I returned home by way of France.

The circus in the Empress Hall proved a first-class attraction, a lucky one, too, for from the beginning of August it rained almost incessantly. The Empress Hall could be entered without walking through the grounds of

the Exhibition, and strangely enough the accountant's figures showed that, while the circus was on, more people paid to go there than paid to go through the turnstiles of the Exhibition.

This sounds curious, because the circus could only be visited after payment of admission to the Exhibition. But the returns showed that we got not only everybody who paid to come to the Exhibition, but a great many season-ticket holders, and also a considerable number of stall-holders who had no business to attend to on account of the weather.

Walking through the grounds one day, while the circus was being got ready, I encountered Princess Mary and two of the young Princes. Mr. Hansell, their tutor, was with them, and he stopped and spoke to me. I told him that the circus artists were rehearsing ; and the Royal children were taken in to see them at work. Some Arabs were tumbling ; the Brothers Clarke were rehearsing their Jockey Act ; and the Flying Hegelmanns were up aloft on their trapeze. Although they were in rough practice clothes, this wonderful troupe went right through their act, and gave an extraordinarily fine performance. The flights, catches, somersaults, and pirouettes were perfect.

At the finish, Prince George—he was a very little fellow then—made the others laugh by saying, " Why are the swings so near ? I should like you to put them farther apart, at each end of the building, and then see if they could do it ! "

CHAPTER XX

The Wonder Zoo at Olympia—The Example of Carl Hagenbeck—£20,000 Short—About Max and Moritz—Moritz develops a Prevailing Fault of Comedians—An Arthur Bourchier Story—Mystery of a Poisoned Circus Horse—I promote the Welsh-Ritchie Fight at Olympia—Ritchie's Manager and Lord Nelson—Lord Lonsdale and the Proposed "Gun-Boat" Smith-Sam Langford Fight—Frank Bostock's "Princess" and the Southend Beauty Show—Family Love in the Showman's World.

MY circus for "Shakespeare's England" at Earl's Court brought me in touch with the late Carl Hagenbeck of Hamburg, and his two sons. Their park at Stellingen, with the animals displayed in more or less natural surroundings, not in cages, but separated from the spectators by trenches, made a great impression upon me. The Mappin terraces at our own Zoo were inspired by Hagenbeck, and had not then come into existence.

I felt myself longing for another big show at Olympia, and began figuring how I could convert Olympia into a reproduction of Stellingen. The idea grew, and up to now in my career as a showman, when that has happened, nearly always the idea has been converted into a fact. The two Hagenbeck boys were a little startled by my proposal; but old Carl almost immediately shared my enthusiasm.

Carl Hagenbeck, the son of a Hamburg fish merchant, was a remarkable man. He was a zoologist of experience and erudition, with whom for many years the authorities of our own Zoological Gardens were in intimate and sympathetic communication. He was a daring explorer, a shrewd and systematic trader, who could supply an expedition with 2000 camels, and yet bring much thought to bear upon the selection of a lady's lap-dog. A vast

proportion of the wild beasts dealt with for one purpose and another throughout the world passed through his hands.

His wonderful animal park at Stellingen, just outside Hamburg, was established in 1897. Hagenbeck thus described the ideal he had in mind :

> " I desired above all things to give the animals the maximum of liberty ; I wished to exhibit them, not as captives confined within narrow spaces, and looked at between bars, but as free to wander from place to place within as large limits as possible. I desired also to refute the prevailing notion that numerous and expensive houses, with complicated heating apparatus, were necessary for keeping wild animals alive and healthy. I hoped to show that far better results could be obtained when they were kept in fresh air, and allowed to grow accustomed to the climate. For the chamois, the wild sheep, and the fox, artificial mountains had to be thrown up ; for animals of the plains, wide commons had to be set apart. For the carnivores, glens had to be established, not confined within railings, but separated from the public only by big deep trenches. In the midst there must be a central building with a large arena for performing animals."

Olympia had been sold by the company with whom I did *The Miracle*, and was now controlled by its present owners, with Mr. R. G. Heaton as managing director. He gave me an option on a Christmas tenancy (1913). Baruchs of Berlin agreed to find a certain sum providing they had the construction work. Then I came upon a wealthy gentleman, who was extremely interested in animals, and he offered me £20,000 upon most generous terms. I had from my own resources paid a deposit on Olympia and a deposit to Hagenbeck.

I seemed to be in clover. I hastened to Hamburg to

complete arrangements, while my lawyers drew up the documents in regard to the finance promised by my friend. Before these were completed, my generous friend died suddenly from a heart attack. There was nothing in writing between us; his heirs knew nothing of the transaction. So I found myself embarked upon a big enterprise without anything like sufficient funds to carry it through. My plans were far advanced; I had decided that a first-class circus should be a feature of the show, and had made several important engagements.

Walking down Bond Street, thinking about my unlucky situation, I found myself outside Keith Prowse's establishment. I had an inspiration. I walked in and asked for the head of the firm, Mr. Prowse Jones.

I told him of my scheme for the Christmas Show, and asked for an advance of £10,000 in consideration of his firm having the sole booking for the circus seats. I walked out of the shop with a promise of the money, and Keith Prowse got their money back in the first two weeks of the show, and, I believe, made a considerable sum of money out of the deal.

I was still in need of more cash, and this was found in an odd way. Outside Verrey's in Regent Street I met Arthur Eliot, whom I had known when he was on the *Daily Mirror*. He wanted a job, and could, he said, find a few thousands, if he could get one.

Not taking his talk with much seriousness, I promised him a job at my Olympia Show if he could get the cash I wanted. And, indeed, Eliot did find £5000, and got his job. This money also was repaid out of the first few weeks' takings. For the first two days 63,000 people paid at the turnstiles, and the circus averaged about £1000 a day in addition for seats.

The Wonder Zoo and Big Circus, as I called my show, was a stupendous affair. On the right of the main hall on entering Olympia one saw, apparently at liberty, a number of magnificent lions roaming about on a mountain. On the left was the display which proved to be the most

popular of the entire show: 500 Barbary apes, also uncaged, and separated from the spectators only by a trench. In the centre of the hall was the circus, with 5000 seats. For this I had, I believe, the finest programme ever staged in a single ring. There were Herr and Frau Direktor Corthy-Althoff, with 250 horses; Frau Althoff was unquestionably the best woman "presenter" of horses "at liberty" I have ever seen.

There were those remarkable chimpanzees, Max and Moritz; Tilli Bebe and her 20 polar bears; Sawade, and 10 magnificent tigers; Corradini, with an act in which he used a horse, an elephant, 2 zebras, and a dog; May Wirth, the star rider of the Barnum Show; Gobert Belling, the clown, with his parody of a bull fight; and the flying Rainats, the best aerial act I have ever seen. Instead of the usual apparatus swinging backwards and forwards, they used a double set of swings set like a cross. The effect of the two sets of gymnasts crossing each other in the air was as graceful as it was sensational.

My cheapest act, through unpremeditated circumstances, proved the biggest draw of all. A *haute école* rider, Baptista Schreiber, an attractive Danish girl, had a superb white stallion, broken to the *haute école* by Schumann, which had cost 20,000 marks (then over £1000) and had been given to her by a famous German scientist. One morning early I was telephoned for, and, going to Olympia, I found Baptista Schreiber in a most agitated state. Her horse was dying, and the veterinary surgeon, who had been summoned, said there was every evidence of poisoning. By the afternoon the horse was dead.

Lord Lonsdale went with me to see the horse, and took charge of the whole affair. He sent immediately to the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons, and the animal was handed over to that body for an autopsy. The autopsy revealed no poison, but all the effects of poison, the throat and stomach being terribly burned. Lord Lonsdale considered it of great importance that the stuff which had done the deadly work should be discovered, as the consequences

might be far-reaching. Scotland Yard did its utmost, but the mystery was never solved, beyond the discovery in the stables of a ball of cayenne ; this, if swallowed, would have the effect produced on the dead horse, but it would be difficult to make any animal swallow a large quantity of it.

Lord Lonsdale organised a fund, and Baptista Schreiber was given a new horse, which was presented in the ring at a special performance at which Queen Alexandra, who had subscribed to the fund, was present.

Max and Moritz were as human as many two-legged performers I have known.

Their performance, which at first consisted of a number of set tricks, became in time an impromptu entertainment. Having, for instance, learnt very easily to ride bicycles, they soon eclipsed the most wonderful human trick cyclists ; their sense of balance was uncanny.

The trainer put in charge of Max and Moritz by Hagenbeck was a young Englishman named Castang. He carried out a theory of Hagenbeck's, that anthropoid apes might, by a systematic education from earliest youth, become accustomed to live like human beings ; intimate association with human beings was one of the essential parts of the system. Hagenbeck told me that it would be futile to educate these chimpanzees on any general principle. Individual peculiarities were as common with them as with human beings, and the characteristics of each animal had to be watched for and dealt with.

Max and Moritz seemed to relish laughter as much as any human comedians I have known. Moritz, alas, developed a fault of some English comedians: over and over again he would repeat a trick that created a laugh. Sometimes the act was entirely spoilt by these repetitions. When this happened, Castang, in the dressing-room afterwards, would order Moritz to sit upon a high shelf, while Max would be regaled with bananas, oranges, and other dainties. Castang, shaking his fist at Moritz, would apostrophise him something like this : " You call yourself

Baptista Schreiber and the Poisoned Stallion

a comedian ; you're a rotten actor ! Just because you get a laugh you have to queer your act by repeating yourself over and over again ! You are not worth a dollar a week ! " Moritz would tremble, mutter, and cry, and sway himself to and fro. The more he cried, the more Max would be regaled with dainties.

Arthur Bourchier recalls occasionally a conversation I had with him one night when he was playing Old Bill in *The Better 'Ole* at the Oxford. Constant repetition, twice daily, had resulted in Old Bill and his companions, Alf and Bert, so elaborating the Bairnsfather jokes that their original savour had been obliterated. When Bourchier first blew out his moustache and said " 'Ullo ! " it provoked a genuine laugh all over the house. Then he got into the habit of doing it in a meaningless way half a dozen times. Each time somebody would laugh, but the laughter got weaker and weaker, until only a few hysterical people were left to titter. It was not until then that Bourchier would leave off blowing out his moustache. I believed that the play was being ruined, and Captain Bairnsfather shared this view. So one night I asked Arthur Bourchier to supper. " You remind me of Moritz," I said, and I told him of the lectures given to the chimpanzee by Castang. Bourchier took the story in good part, and for several days we had fresh rehearsals, and tried to give *The Better 'Ole* its original atmosphere.

It was in July 1914—when I was waiting a chance to do revue at the Ambassadors' Theatre—that it came about that I made my début as a boxing promoter, staging the first world's championship fight that had been held in England for many years.

The light-weight champion of the world at that time was Willie Ritchie. Our own light-weight champion, Freddie Welsh, had been doing his utmost to get a match with Ritchie in America ; but Ritchie could not be brought up to the scratch. Large sums were offered by various American promoters, but Ritchie's demands were always excessive. Welsh let me know through Harry Pollok, his

manager, that he would fight for a percentage of the profits, without any guarantee, if the match could be brought off in England; so I started negotiations by cable, and it was arranged for the principals and their managers to meet at Considine's sporting hotel, the Metropole, at the corner of Broadway and 42nd Street, New York. George Considine, a great power in the New York sporting world, told Ritchie that if he did not sign he would be a "quitter." Ritchie assured Considine that he was not averse from a fight, but as a champion he was entitled to demand his price, which was 25,000 dollars, win, lose, or draw. Now I had already told Pollok that this was the sum I was prepared to offer, and Considine knew this.

"All right, then," said Considine; "there is nothing to stop the match. I have authority from Mr. C. B. Cochran of England to offer you the sum you ask." This was a surprise to Ritchie, who asked who Cochran was, and said he didn't know anything about England. He wanted to see the cash before he signed any articles.

"Right again," replied Considine; "the money shall be in the bank to-morrow morning at ten."

A cable from Pollok told me that the match had been signed, that the articles had been mailed to me, and that Ritchie's purse money, 25,000 dollars, was deposited in a New York bank. This was a complete surprise to me, for, although I was prepared to send the money to New York, that step had not been demanded of me, and I had not sent the 25,000 dollars. Until Pollok and Ritchie arrived in London I did not know that Considine had induced his friend, Arnold Rothstein, to put up the money in my name. "If you don't know Cochran," Considine had told Ritchie, "I do, and what he says goes." There was never a line in writing between Considine, his backer, or myself, in regard to the money deposited in my name. I did not know Considine very well, but I had met him some years previously, and had taken a liking to him. Apparently that feeling was reciprocated.

From the boxing point of view the match was a success.

Welsh was an example of the value of the brain in the make-up of a boxer. He could weigh up a man's qualities and shortcomings in a remarkable way. He mapped out for himself systems of training specially fitted to test the men he was to meet. I think, too, that he was the first Englishman to become a master of the American method of "in-fighting."

The majority of English boxers have never grasped the science of "in-fighting." A lot that the big public—as distinguished from the expert public—considers "in-fighting" is nothing of the kind. Before a man can "in-fight" he must use his brains to see how he can get through his opponent's defence.

The fight created an enormous amount of interest among the connoisseurs of boxing, although in 1914 there were not enough of these to fill Olympia. Outside the National Sporting Club there was little boxing in London, save at Wonderland and the Hoxton Baths. The big match for the big gathering was new to England. Then, again, Welsh was not a pretty fighter, while Ritchie was practically unknown in this country. The match, however, obtained a large amount of publicity, and although little, if any, profit resulted for myself or Welsh, who shared the risk with me, the "gate" was more than sufficient to pay all the expenses of this, my first big fight at Olympia.

The contest went the twenty rounds, and Welsh, winning on points, became World's light-weight champion, which title he lost later to Benny Lennard, one of the most remarkable boxers ever seen.

Willie Ritchie was an interesting young man, and I spent many pleasant hours with him during his training at Brighton, where he made his headquarters with Mr. Harry Preston. One day we went to lunch at the Burford Bridge Hotel. Ritchie was intensely interested when shown the room where Lord Nelson had slept, and, calling his manager, he said, "Look here, Nelson slept in this bedroom." "Nelson!" said the manager, whose interest

was only in the boxing ring; "was that before he met Gans, or afterwards?" "Battling" Nelson was the only warrior of that name the American fight-manager knew.

I had planned to follow Welsh and Ritchie at Olympia with a match between the American "Gun-Boat" Smith, then considered about the best American white heavyweight, and Sam Langford, the negro boxer, who had made a great impression in England. Terms had been fixed with both men, and the match was to take place at the end of July, when Lord Lonsdale rang me up to say that he would like to have a talk with me at his house in Carlton House Terrace. He told me that the Home Office was against a black and white contest; he was anxious that I should not go ahead with my arrangements, and thereby suffer loss. It was a kindness which I appreciated, and I acted upon his advice, which proved well founded, as Sir George Cave, at that time Home Secretary, sent for me a few days later, and expressed a fervent wish for the match to be called off. The result was that I set out for Paris to find Georges Carpentier, and persuade him to be a substitute for the black boxer.

Carpentier and Descamps were at their home at Lens celebrating the wedding of Carpentier's brother. With C. M. Ercole, an impresario long established in Paris, I took train one Sunday for that town. It was a tiresome journey on a very hot summer's day, made possible only by the pleasant companionship of Ercole. I never knew whether he was French or English. He spoke French perfectly, and English like an Oxford don. He made one fortune and retired; lost it in speculation, and went back to his office in the Chaussée d'Antin. We found Descamps and Carpentier in the midst of a happy crowd of friends and relatives; but my journey was a fruitless one, as Dick Burge had conceived the same idea, and two days previously had got Carpentier's signature to meet Gun-Boat Smith in the event of my match with Langford falling through. All I got was the promise of Descamps and Carpentier that, if successful with Gun-Boat Smith, they

would give me the first chance of promoting any other match in which they took part.

The night of my return to Paris I was visited by a German named Sauerwein, whom some years previously I had met at Great Yarmouth, where I had a scenic railroad on the sands and had also, with Frank Bostock, the lease of a moving-picture theatre. Sauerwein wanted me to come to Germany and promote an Anglo-German exhibition. He had, he assured me, the site; the contracts for the building and the finance had been all arranged. A few weeks after that we were at war.

Frank Bostock was a fine showman, who ofttimes helped me with sound advice, and once he was my colleague in an amusing piece of "bunkum." "Pa" Payne, who was a director of Allsopps', had asked me to try and give a "lift" to the Kursaal at Southend-on-Sea, which was owned by the Allsopps. I engineered a Beauty Show. It was in the dog days, and the London papers gave it a lot of preliminary space. It occurred to me one day at Yarmouth to send a wire to the local manager at Southend, who was receiving entries, asking if the contest were international and, if so, whether an entry would be accepted from the Princess Dinibubu. The telegram was signed in the name of the Princess. The manager at Southend made a great display of this telegram, and the Yarmouth correspondents went in search of the Princess, who could not be discovered, though one man professed to have seen her digging a hole in the Yarmouth sands and burying herself therein for an hour. She had told him that the sands of Yarmouth had the same beautifying quality as her native sands.

I realised that it was necessary that the imaginary Princess should be created, so I sought Frank Bostock, knowing he had some coloured employees, and he produced a dusky maiden who was the sweetheart of one of his lion-tamers at Earl's Court. She was a Cingalese—and knew but two or three words of English, which made her a safe confederate.

On the day of the Beauty Show I went to Southend Station to meet the Princess. The Mayor, some members of the Corporation, and a brass band, were there, and among the party was my old friend, Eugène Corri, the boxing referee. Eugène Corri expressed surprise that no carpet had been laid down on the platform, and the Mayor, who happened to be in the carpet business, dispatched porters to his shop, and they returned with a long red roll. The pseudo-Princess was escorted to the Palace Hotel in an open carriage. She drew the crowd—but not the prize money. She wasn't even placed.

There was a sequel. The " Princess " entered an action against me and others for holding her up to ridicule. A five-pound note disposed of the several claims she made for thousands of pounds damages.

Poor Frank Bostock died from a cold caught when travelling. It was a great shock to his many friends and his family, because he was an exceedingly robust man, and a most careful liver. He was a splendid showman, of showman stock, and inclined to be less conservative than his elder brother, E. H., who became interested in theatrical and other property, and is now, I should imagine, a very wealthy citizen of Glasgow. He is still the owner of Bostock & Wombwell's Menagerie, which is known throughout the countryside. His sons, too, have developed into splendid business men, and the old name of Bostock looks like figuring in the show world for many years to come.

Generally I avoid attending the funerals of even my closest friends and relatives, but I responded to the invitation of the Bostock family and went to the gathering of the family at Frank's flat in Kensington. In no world is family love so strong as in the showman world, and the Bostocks were never apart. When Frank made trips across the Atlantic he invariably took the whole of his numerous family—a costly thing to do. At the funeral were a lot of old friends of the travelling-show world. One old van-dweller, with tears in his eyes, took me by the

arm and said, " This is a sad day, Bo'. He was the greatest single-handed showman who ever lived. Let's have a drink." After a couple of drinks the old van-dweller, with more tears in his eyes, said, " Remember the old saying, ' There's always a silver lining ' ? There's nothing to stop you now from being the greatest showman on earth."

The intense and sincere grief of the family made the humour of what he said seem the more grim.

CHAPTER XXI

How I came to engage Delysia—Her Songs at Fragson's Party—The First Revue at the Ambassadors'—£500 a Week Profit—Delysia's £6 a Week—Arthur Playfair's "Excessive New Year's Eve"—The Bottomley Engagement at the Empire—The *Sunday Pictorial* Article—The Production of *Watch Your Step*—I persuade Grock to leave the Circus Ring—"June's" First Part—The Story of Billie Carlton—The Amazing John Marsh.

I HAD long visualised for London a revue on the line of those at the Capucines and other small theatres in Paris. The new Ambassadors' Theatre in the Seven Dials seemed ideal for the purpose. After the acquisition of the lease, or, to be technically correct, a three years' agreement, I began to look for talent.

At the Olympia, Paris, where I had gone to see a star dancer, I noticed, playing a part of some half a dozen lines, a young woman, who appeared to me to be possessed of a curious magnetism. Her only chance was in a burlesque of a current play by Henri Bataille. She was impersonating Yvonne de Bray in one of her emotional moments. This young woman had the "tear in the voice." That gift cannot be acquired. But you can sit with your eyes shut in any theatre and know that you are listening to a big artist directly the voice gives you a tremor down the spine.

"Who is this girl?" I said to Adolph Braff, the variety agent, who was with me. "You must know her," he replied. "She was several years in London, where you must have met her as Madame Harry Fragson. She parted from Fragson a year before his tragic murder by his father, and went back to the stage to make a living. They call her Alice Delysia."

I did, indeed, remember having met the young woman

Alice Delysia

in London. One night in Fragson's flat she kept a party of us entranced with her simple singing of a number of old French ballads. I said to her then: "Why don't you go on the stage?" Fragson retorted: "She would drive everybody out of the theatre!" And I remember, too, that she said she would be no good in the theatre; she had tried it and had not got beyond the chorus.

That night in Paris I met John Tiller, famous all over the world for his English dancers. I asked him if he knew Delysia, and he told me that as a chorus girl she was full of promise. Always she had been ready to deputise for anybody who was "off," from Mistinguett to Marnac, and always she gave a good account of herself. "But," added Tiller, "the French manager seldom recognises an artist till she is forty years of age."

Shortly after this I saw Delysia deputising for Mrs. Vernon Castle, who was making her first success in Paris. Delysia was not a dancer, but her natural sense of the stage enabled her to give a most creditable performance. I did not engage Delysia at our first meeting, because she was tied up by a contract that contained several options, but she promised that when she could get free she would come to London.

I got possession of the Ambassadors' Theatre in August 1914, and that determined me to devote my energies to theatre management. I had made a number of engagements and had a revue in the making, but my original arrangements were destined to non-fulfilment by reason of the Great War. For the first month or two it was doubtful if the theatres would remain open. In October I decided to make a start, but with a revue applicable to the times and with a cosmopolitan cast, which I felt would appeal to the many strangers within our midst. I engaged Max Dearly and Jeanne St. Bonnet; Leon Morton, the attenuated droll, who had often amused me in Paris; and Delysia, who by now had come to London. The principal English players were J. M. Campbell; Millie Sim, the charming daughter of Millie Hylton, who is now Mrs. Stanley Mills; little

Betty Balfour, now the film star ; and several other useful people. I particularly wanted eight English dancing girls, the Grecian Maids, who, under the direction of J. W. Jackson, had been a feature of Reinhardt's Munich production of *La Belle Helène* ; but they were in Germany at the outbreak of the war and it was some time before they reached England. The difficulties they experienced in getting home supplied the basic idea of my revue. Leaving Berlin, they travelled for a day or so, when suddenly they were put out of the train and kept at a station—the name of which they did not know—for a day or so more. They were put on another train, and the same thing happened. How many frontiers they crossed they could never tell. " When we reached England," one of them told me, " I had no idea that I was in England until I heard the English-speaking porters."

That gave me the idea. I approached several authors, and began to despair of finding one who grasped what I wished to present. Then I thought of Harry Grattan, and dug him out of some rooms in Lower Regent Street. In a few days the revue was complete, and we produced it with no attempt at scenery, just plain black curtains. That alone was a departure for the London stage.

The opening scene showed the Ambassadors' stage quite bare save for a table, at which sat Mr. J. M. Campbell in the rôle of the stage doorkeeper of a deserted theatre at a seaport town. The revue began by his reading of a letter from the proprietor of the theatre, who was at the front. For ten minutes at least Campbell kept the audience in roars at the humorous topical sallies written by Mr. Grattan. Then one saw, through the actual stage door of the Ambassadors' Theatre, porters bringing in baskets, boxes, and the other paraphernalia of a travelling troupe. The porters were followed by the troupe itself, headed by Max Dearly. All rushed up to the stage doorkeeper, clamouring to him in every language but English. The stage doorkeeper, nonplussed, blurted out in the vernacular of the stage-hand a very obvious English phrase. There

was a chorus of " Where are we ? " The follow-on was obvious. " Here's a theatre—we are players—let's give a show. What can we do ? " And it was Max Dearly who got a laugh by saying, " Why, we have some English dancers, so why not give a French revue ? " So started what I consider was the best revue ever presented in London.

On the opening night the theatre was filled with the usual first-night audience composed of dramatic critics, managers, agents, players, and theatrical hangers-on. The lack of scenery, the entirely new form of entertainment, the obvious economy, left the audience in blank dismay. The critics, the next day, either damned us by leaving us alone or by cutting us to ribbons. One paper said, " Of *Odds and Ends* it would be kinder to say nothing ! " I had put in the programme the following words : " Mr. Charles B. Cochran has spared no economy in mounting this revue." A Scotch dramatic critic pointed out that I should employ somebody who would not permit me to use the word " economy " when evidently I meant " expense."

Often I have accepted defeat at the hands of an audience, and said to myself at the end of the first performance, " They're right. How is it I didn't see it before ? " This time I was quite sure that the verdict of the first-night audience and the dramatic critics was at fault. I had conceived an entertainment which was too new, too revolutionary, and I had to find my audience.

I was, as I thought, alone in the theatre after the audience had left, when Mr. Waddington of Webster & Waddington, the well-known theatre ticket agents, found me out and said, " Cochran, if you persevere with this you will have a success." I have always been grateful to him for these words, which I felt in my own heart were right.

And so it proved. Business was not wonderful. We started by playing to from £25 to £30 a night. Gradually the receipts rose to £40. I found that the people I believed I should attract were coming to my theatre and were coming

again and again. On one night, in the first month of the run, I saw in the stalls Lord D'Abernon, Mrs. Asquith, Lady Diana Manners, Augustus John, Philippe de Vilmorin, and a large number of interesting people. I resolved to have another bid for the press, so I put in a new scene, and invited them all over again. This time I rigorously kept out the usual first-night audience other than the critics, and carefully spread the critics among the paying public. In a little theatre like the Ambassadors', to have sitting together five or six people who don't laugh or applaud is demoralising. The house was filled with regular customers who had seen the revue over and over again, and everything went with a rattle and a roar from start to finish.

The notices the next day were as enthusiastic as, on the first occasion, they were damning. *Odds and Ends* ran for nearly five hundred nights, and I made a profit of £500 a week.

That, of course, would be impossible in these days, with the cost of theatre rentals and the cost of the artists. I had a brilliant company getting small salaries. I began by paying Delysia £6 per week, and Morton, one of the best comedians I have ever known, £15. Max Dearly retired early in the run, and I supplemented my company with the Japanese actress, Hanako.

When a long-standing engagement for pantomime took J. M. Campbell away at Christmas, I replaced him by Arthur Playfair. This great comedian was excellent as always, but in the parts created by Harry Grattan for Campbell he was not quite so good as his predecessor. Playfair was naturally hard and biting; Campbell was the reverse.

Arthur Playfair was a Bohemian of the school that passed away with the death of Frank Otter, whose boon companion he was. He was given to having large supper-parties which sometimes meant the missing of a performance next day. Arthur and I were very old friends, and when I made the engagement with him I told him frankly that

it would be a serious blow to me should he miss a performance. He promised the very best of behaviour, and all went well till New Year's Eve, when he organised a party that eclipsed all his previous records. I feared the worst, and at ten o'clock next morning went to his house, intending to stay with him all day. But I was too late. He had left at nine. After these bouts he could not sleep, and that was the danger. On New Year's Day I received a doctor's certificate, as reproduced below :

> " This is to certify that Mr. Arthur Playfair is suffering from ' Excessive New Year's Eve.' "

I didn't go near Arthur Playfair for two or three days, and when we met we never referred to the matter. For the rest of the engagement all was well.

After Arthur Playfair's first appearance in *Odds and Ends*, he asked me to sup with him at the Queen's Hotel. A fellow-guest was Johnnie Nathan, a well-known Covent Garden character. " I think you have got a hit, me boy," Nathan kept saying ; " everything now is up to the press. I am a great believer in the press. I shall turn to-morrow to the *Sporting Life*, and if the *Life* says it's all right, you have got a hit, me boy."

Playfair, after one of his bouts, could be most aggressive. He arrived at the Palace Theatre one night to find a notice that friends were in future not to be allowed in the players' dressing-rooms. He immediately sought Sir Alfred Butt. Alluding to the notice, he asked Sir Alfred if he knew the sort of guests who came to see him in his dressing-room. " I have had the honour, sir," he said, " to entertain Sir Douglas Haig, Admiral Beatty, Admiral Jellicoe, Robert Standish Sievier, and Horatio Bottomley. Are these gentlemen, sir, to be refused admission, when I meet every night, behind the scenes, a man with whom I would not shake hands ?

" Our Lord," he continued, " was sold for thirty pieces of silver. This man, I believe, obtained a far greater price for the sale of his wife."

One night, the opening night of a new revue, he committed a serious indiscretion. There was, in front, an official who had to do with Food Control. His friendship with a French actress was well known. Playfair alluded to his presence, and added he had heard that his activities had been extended to the control of French pastry.

Innumerable tales are told of Frank Otter. During the Balkan War he induced West de Wend Fenton, who then owned the *Sporting Times*, to send him out as a war correspondent. Ashmead Bartlett told me how Frank arrived at some village where the correspondents were quartered in a barn. He was wearing a short black jacket, a beautifully tied stock, blue with white spots, sponge-bag trousers perfectly creased, and patent leather boots with white tops and large white buttons. On his head was a Turkish fez. At that time the number of war correspondents was restricted, and it was a mystery to the regular correspondents how Otter had got there.

His interview with the officer in charge of the correspondents must have been something to hear. The officer had never heard of the *Pink 'Un*. "Don't you know," said Otter, "that it is a military journal; it derives its name from the red coats of the British Army?" He got his permit.

Miss Ida Bernard, the handsome lady of magnificent proportions who became Mrs. Frank Otter, was engaged by me for the chorus of *Watch Your Step*. We announced her as the champion heavy-weight chorus girl of the world.

During the run of *Odds and Ends*, Mr. Alfred Butt (he was not then Sir Alfred) asked me to take charge of the Empire as general manager. It was many years since I had been a salaried employee, and I was loath to give up any part of my independence. Persuaded, however, by my old friend, Ernest Polden, who was associated with the Palace and other Butt enterprises, I accepted a salary and percentage of profits engagement. At the end of the first year I was to have the right to say if I would go on or not. Butt assured me that I should have absolute

discretion as to the choice of entertainment for the Empire ; the engagement was not to interfere with my running of my own theatre, the Ambassadors'.

When I started, the Empire programme consisted of variety turns and a small ballet. Business was deplorable. Prior to my appointment, Butt had been in negotiation with Charles B. Dillingham for the production of *Watch Your Step*, and he had George Graves under contract. There was not much time to be lost, as an attraction was badly needed.

Butt said, " I am not going to attempt to force you to do this. It is up to you." And, although I had not seen the play, I had heard the music and knew a good deal about it, and I thought Butt's choice a good one. So it was arranged that *Watch Your Step* should be put into rehearsal as soon as possible, and that the original producer, Mr. R. H. Burnside, should come over to stage it. I suggested Ethel Levey and Joe Coyne for the parts played by Mr. and Mrs. Vernon Castle in America, and they were engaged. I also engaged Lupino Lane, who was new to the West End, at £20 a week, and Blanche Tomlin, at £35 a week. I proposed for the Opera House scene a ballet in which Phyllis Bedells, so long a favourite at the Empire, could appear.

Meanwhile I had to carry on, and the first thing I did was to engage Horatio Bottomley, at £100 a night, to deliver a short speech. I have no figures by me, but unless my recollection be at fault, the receipts the first week Bottomley appeared were £1100 in advance of the preceding week, and they went back to the original figure at the end of his engagement.

I had come to know Bottomley a short time before this. The day after Carpentier and Gun-Boat Smith met at Olympia I received a telephone message asking me if I would go over to his flat in King Street and drink a glass of wine with him. I found Mr. Descamps, Carpentier's manager, there, and briefly, Bottomley's proposal was for me to run a return match between Carpentier and Smith.

When he told me the terms that he had offered the boxers, I advised him not to go ahead; I did not believe there was a place in London big enough to hold the crowd required to make the match pay. "You do not know the power of *John Bull*," was Bottomley's reply.

He offered me a liberal percentage of the gross receipts, with a sum of £1000 on account, and I left the flat with a preliminary cheque for £250—as an earnest of good faith. A few days later Gun-Boat Smith called the match "off," and announced his intention of returning to America.

But Bottomley was still anxious to find another match for Carpentier, and eventually Dan M'Ketrick stepped into the breach with young Ahearn, known in America as "The Dancing Master." Ahearn had made an impression at the National Sporting Club by knocking out Private Braddock of the Marines, a tough lad who was outwitted by the defensive dodges of Ahearn. Braddock was always trying to hit him, but could never find him. All round the club they were saying that another Ted Pritchard had been found.

Dan M'Ketrick was a shrewd young fellow, whom I had known as assistant to Bob Edgren when the latter was sporting editor of the New York *Evening World*. He told Bottomley that Ahearn was the coming champion. Ahearn was dubbed "John Bull's Boy," and got a good sum on account for training and other expenses.

But the match did not come off, because war was declared, and Carpentier left to join up, after a farewell luncheon given to him by Bottomley at the Hotel Metropole on 5th August. Descamps, Eugène Corri, A. F. Bettinson of the National Sporting Club, and myself were in the party. Bottomley gave Descamps a substantial deposit, which he agreed Descamps should hold as binding him for Carpentier's next match—whenever that might be. During the war, Descamps returned this deposit, which left him free to make other engagements for the French boxer.

Dan M'Ketrick also left with his protégé for America,

having done better without a fight than I imagine most boxing managers have done with events that have been carried through. I could keep no track of Bottomley's disbursements for the proposed fight. It seemed to me that he had only to be asked for money for him to " shell out." I could not reconcile such transactions with the man who was always advocating a " business Government." His treatment of me was generosity itself. When the match was declared " off," he offered to give me the balance of the £1000 which he had promised; but I declined to take it. I did, however, accept a further £250, as I had done a good deal of work and given up a considerable amount of time.

While Bottomley was at the Empire most of the papers reported his speeches, and gave this unusual engagement a great deal of publicity. The Northcliffe Press, however, was entirely silent. One night, in the Empire promenade, I met Mr. Lima, then Lord Rothermere's right-hand man, and told him of the striking effect which Bottomley's appearance had had on the Empire receipts; and I suggested that such being the case the engagement must be a matter of public interest, and ought to be worthy of comment in a newspaper. Perhaps it was this conversation that impressed Mr. Lima. Anyhow, a few weeks afterwards he telephoned, asking me to make an appointment with Mr. Randal Charlton of the *Daily Mirror*. Charlton came and told me in great secrecy that a new Sunday paper, to be known as the *Sunday Pictorial*, was to come out on the following Sunday. The paper was to forestall the *Sunday Herald*, announced by the Hulton Press to come out in two weeks' time. The *Sunday Pictorial* wanted a writer who could command the masses, and the man they had thought of was Horatio Bottomley.

" But why come to me ? " I said. " I have no influence with Bottomley. Why not go to him direct ? "

Charlton told me that Bottomley had protested that he had been ignored by the Northcliffe and associated papers; and the long and the short of it was that I agreed to see

what I could do. As to payment, I told Charlton that from what I knew of Bottomley he always needed £1000, but never £100. "Give me," I said, "a cheque for £1000, and I will get as many articles from him as possible."

Mr. Charlton went back to Mr. Lima. It was suggested that I should get Bottomley's consent to some definite arrangement before any money passed hands. I persuaded them, however, to leave everything to me, and a few hours later a cheque for £1000 reached me. Meanwhile, I had seen Bottomley, and got him to agree to write ten articles at £100 each. I hadn't received the cheque two minutes before Bottomley telephoned me.

"Do you speak French?" he said.

"A little," I replied.

"Then, avez-vous touché?"

I told him I had a cheque for £1000 in my pocket. I took it over to him. He signed a letter, agreeing to do the ten articles, and the deal was closed. The ten articles were a big success, and I believe that Lord Rothermere sent Bottomley a handsome cash present when the series ended.

That contract having expired, Bottomley got coy, and talked about other offers. The *Sunday Pictorial* did not trouble about him for a time, but in the end Randal Charlton again came to me, and another contract with Bottomley was signed.

I did not benefit in any pecuniary sense by these negotiations. I was pleased to get the money for Bottomley as some sort of return for what he had done for me in regard to the fight. I managed also to arrange a contract for him to give addresses at the Pavilion, Glasgow, and for that he received £1000 for one week.

The hold that Bottomley had upon the masses at this time may be judged by the following:

Seymour Hicks wrote a short recruiting play which he asked Bottomley to finance. Bottomley agreed on condition that I took charge of his interests. The play was produced at the London Opera-House, and before the

curtain went up Bottomley was to make a speech. The crowds who attempted to get into the building were so dense that Aldwych was blocked for a time, and the doors had to be closed.

Next, Bottomley asked me to organise a meeting for him at the Albert Hall. I did so, and as a preparatory step went to the police, and warned them of the crowds which might be expected. They offered the same protection which had been provided for a meeting held just previously at which Lloyd George, Asquith, and Winston Churchill spoke; but in effect the police arrangements were so inadequate that Bottomley, announced to open the meeting at half-past seven, could not get through the crowd into the hall until half-past nine, and I had to keep the meeting going with speakers I found in the hall, selections by the orchestra, and Charles Coborn, singing "Two Lovely Black Eyes" in several languages.

I write of Bottomley as I knew him. My impression of him was of a hopeless optimist, the most reckless, unbusiness-like person I have met. He had no sense of organisation, and in dealing with individuals he was a bad judge of character. He was the last person in the world to control large sums of money. It was, I believe, his extravagant optimism that brought about his downfall. In my opinion he believed in his schemes when he started them.

I come back to *Watch Your Step*. At the dress rehearsal it was obvious that the first act was stronger than the second. This was due, perhaps, to the fact that in New York there were two strong specialities introduced into the second act, Frank Tinney and Mr. and Mrs. Vernon Castle, whose dancing had become the rage of New York. Burnside and I decided to reverse the order, putting the second act first and the first act last, and in an hour or so Grattan had so altered the script that the story was as plausible played backwards as forwards. The piece was a triumph on the first night. Ethel Levey, Joe Coyne, and George Graves have never been seen to greater advantage,

and Irving Berlin's music swept the audience off their feet. Even those who decry Jazz, cannot deny the genius of this wonderful little man. Stravinsky once told me that he believed Berlin's music would outlive any other of the early part of the twentieth century. I often found Mr. G. H. Clutsam, then musical critic of the *Observer*, in the promenade of the Empire, and he told me it was the music of Irving Berlin that brought him there. After the stars had been applauded on the first night, there were loud calls for Lupino Lane, who had scored in a small part. Alfred Butt and everybody concerned was overjoyed with the very obvious success. Burnside's splendid work received its share of compliments, and he himself said to Butt, pointing to me, " Don't let's forget the one man who has been optimistic through all the rehearsals."

In the programme at the Empire, when I began my managership, was a little ballet called *The Vine*, in which there appeared a juvenile dancer called " Little June." She had great charm and considerable ability as a dancer. I told her to bide her time and I would give her a chance. The chance came when Phyllis Bedells left the cast of *Watch Your Step*, and I replaced her, as *première danseuse*, by Little June. In the opera scene we had produced, with care, the famous *pas de quatre*, danced by four great dancers of a previous era. Mr. Alias carefully copied the costumes from an old engraving in my possession. Its beautiful and graceful dignity furnished a contrast to the feverish music of Berlin, and it was a great success. The diminutive " June," among the full-grown dancers, was an innovation.

There is no need for me to say how, in subsequent London productions, " June " has proved herself a winsome and talented artist.

Another change in the cast occurred when I substituted Grock, the inimitable French clown, for Lupino Lane, who left for pantomime. Years before I had got to know the genius of Grock, when he was a circus clown, with Antonnet as partner. It was due to me that he left the circus and appeared on the music-halls. It was rather difficult for

Grock to follow in a part which had been specially created to exploit the particular abilities of Lupino Lane, and at that time the French clown's knowledge of English was very imperfect. But he worked like a Trojan, and gave a capital interpretation of the part, and, of course, more than justified his engagement by doing his own act in a special scene.

I gave another youngster her first chance in *Watch Your Step*—some one whose life ended tragically. Ethel Levey was leaving; such a dominant personality was difficult to replace. There was nobody with a name who would not suffer by comparison, so I decided upon a contrast, and took from the chorus a young girl of flower-like beauty, delicate charm, and great intelligence—Billie Carlton.

Despite her inexperience and her tiny voice, she pleased the audience. A more beautiful creature has never fluttered upon a stage. She seemed scarcely human, so fragile was she.

The story of Billie Carlton is one of my saddest memories of the theatre. I had met her just before the war, when she was little more than a flapper, at Ghent. The man who introduced me to her asked me to keep an eye on her and to try and keep her in engagements.

Much has been written about Billie Carlton which would give a wrong impression. She was the victim of circumstances which she was not strong enough to control. Her childhood had given her a positive fear of alcohol, and she was, all the time I knew her, a strict teetotaller, although her nervous temperament, always craving for excitement, must have desired stimulant of some kind.

One day, after I had given her the part at the Empire, Mrs. Frank Otter told me that Billie Carlton was being influenced by some undesirable people and was going to opium parties. I talked to the girl, and I warned two of the men, into whose clutches she had fallen, that I should not hesitate to do all in my power to get them sent

out of the country if I found them interfering with her again.

For a time I am sure she gave up the use of drugs and went in for a healthy, outdoor life. She played golf, she rode, she went to bed early; and, later, I gave her a fresh chance in *Houp-La* at the St. Martin's. She had the part that Gertie Millar had created. Billie Carlton was disappointing in this. But she was beautiful to look at, and she had made an impression on theatre-going London, and was in demand.

I saw her infrequently after this, meeting her only at parties or in restaurants. The very last time I met her was at Albert Hall, on the fateful night. She looked ravishingly beautiful and seemed happy, and she ran up to give me a hug when she saw me.

The news of her death next day was a terrible shock to me. The comments which I heard made my blood boil. Billie Carlton never had a chance against heredity. That is the explanation of her downfall. She tried her hardest to resist temptation, but there were horrible people who would not leave her alone. Billie had an affectionate nature. She was intelligent, and even accomplished. She was well read, she spoke French and German, and was an excellent pianist. Had she fallen into the right hands, her future might have been brilliant.

I have referred to meeting Billie Carlton at Ghent. It was just after Carpentier had defeated Bombardier Wells, on Sunday, 1st June 1919—one of the most dramatic fights of all time. Eugène Corri, Ernest Edelsten, a variety agent, Harry Preston, and a number of other men who knew me well, had met in Ghent two brothers, John Darlington and Gilbert Marsh, who had taken over the amusement and catering concessions of the Ghent Exhibition.

These two men found themselves concessionaires in a curious way. Some one had asked John Marsh to lend him £1500 so that he might take up the chair and lavatory concessions at the Exhibition. The idea amused Marsh, and he went to Ghent with his friend, and paid the money

for the concession. After that he stayed at the Hotel de la Poste, and spent money in a way that astonished the frugal Belgians. This wealthy English "Mi-lor" was not a person whom the shrewd men, whose responsibility was to make the Exhibition a success, felt ought to leave Ghent without further substantial interest in the Exhibition. They expressed a wish to return his hospitality, and he was given a banquet; and, before he left Ghent, he had paid a large deposit for the restaurant and amusement concessions.

As Marsh knew nothing about either of these difficult businesses, it was not surprising that nothing went right. When he tried to sublet his concessions, he found that all his sub-concessionaires needed money to carry out their contracts. This he advanced to them. Then, shortly before the opening of the Exhibition, all the workmen went on strike, so that when the Exhibition opened nothing was ready. To crown the other misfortunes, there was an accident on the water-chute the first time it ran.

By the date of the Carpentier fight, Marsh was £100,000 out, and he could not estimate what his liabilities would be before the end of the season. Ernest Edelsten brought Marsh to see me in London, and he made a business proposal that I should see what could be done to help him so far as the amusement part was concerned. I took with me to Ghent my accountant, Mr. Ros Sharp, who had had experience as an Exhibition accountant at Brussels, and he and I came to the conclusion that Marsh's position must inevitably get worse and worse. Everything was being run at a loss, and in no circumstances could be made to pay. We gave Marsh a detailed report. To my surprise, instead of looking glum, he roared with laughter, ordered champagne and an expensive luncheon, and then casually informed me that he was going with me by the afternoon train to Paris.

We stayed the night in Paris. In the morning I went with him to the bank, where apparently he was well known and well thought of—I remember that, although it was

but 9.30 in the morning, he insisted on the bank manager sharing in a bottle of champagne. This bank advanced him a large sum of money, and we returned to London.

Marsh never returned to Ghent. He allowed himself to be made a bankrupt in Belgium. There was an echo of this in the courts recently.

On the way to London he told me some curious stories about his experiences at Ghent. Losses didn't worry him, he said, because he could always make money. The thing which gave him most satisfaction was how he came to dispose of the English grill-room to a German restaurant keeper for £1000. When all the other restaurants were empty, his grill-room did an enormous business. At the luncheon and dinner hours there were queues, and season ticket-holders to the Exhibition came solely to lunch and dine in this grill-room. Splendid chops and steaks, English ales, baked potatoes, and English sauces, could be had at cheap prices. So busy was this grill-room that the Marsh Brothers themselves, and some of the clerical staff, would lend a hand during the rush hours, cutting up steaks and serving out drinks.

At last the splendid business that was being done attracted a German restaurateur, and Marsh sold him the concession for £1000. But when the German went into accounts he found that everything was being sold at a loss ; the greater the volume of business, the greater the loss on the restaurant.

So this new proprietor, though giving the same quality of food and drink, decided to charge prices which allowed a proper proportion of profit. For the first few days there were stormy scenes when bills were presented, because the regular clients knew the menu and the prices by heart. In a few days the business had fallen away altogether, and in a few weeks the German proprietor closed the restaurant.

Marsh took me to the Albany to show me the flat he had taken. It was the largest in the Albany, and he had

spent a small fortune in furnishing it, including a billiard room with a brand new billiard table.

All this time I had been trying to guess who and what Marsh was. He paid me generously for my services. He seemed to me to be about the richest man in the world. It was only when, after saying, "I am pretty good at billiards"—he added, with a quick glance at me, "in fact I am pretty good at most games," that I sized him up. He took a party of people to Ascot in a new Rolls-Royce, and entertained my wife, myself, and some friends in the most lavish manner. Immediately after Ascot he left London, and it was two years before I saw him again.

It was John Marsh who had introduced me to Billie Carlton when she was a girl in Ghent, and it was he who asked me to keep a kindly eye upon her. At the inquest he became known as the man who had given her a large sum of money a few days before her death.

I can recollect the surprised look of the people in court when he said he saw nothing unusual in giving Miss Carlton so large a sum of money. When asked if he would have given it again had she lived to ask him, he replied quite simply, "Certainly I would." The sordid, mean people in the coroner's court opened their eyes, and regarded this man as if he were a sort of fairy prince.

John Marsh's own end was bound up with that of Billie. He caught a cold at her graveside, and died of pneumonia.

CHAPTER XXII

Miss Iris Hoey and her Dresses—Delysia's Singing of "We don't want to lose you"—Mr. Morton's Love of Conjuring—Tree proposes a Revue at His Majesty's—The Lord Chamberlain and Mr. George Graves—Dorothy Minto's Naturalness—The Prettiest Collection of Girls at the St. Martin's Theatre—Binnie Hale's First Chance—How Delysia helped her with her Dresses—*Carminetta* and the Author of *Simon called Peter*—When Morton disappointed—Mr. Monckton Hoffe calls me a Blackguard—Robert de Flers, Author of *Le Roi*—What King Edward said to him about the Play—Lavallière a White-Haired Old Lady—A Big Fairy.

BY the time that I produced *More*, the second revue at the Ambassadors', Delysia and Morton had become great favourites; Jimmy Campbell had returned to the fold; Betty Balfour had the company of another child actress in Joan Carroll, who recently has become a Parisian favourite; Murri Moncrieff and Hanako were with me from *Odds and Ends*; I had added Morris Harvey and Iris Hoey to the company.

We had a Japanese play, in which all the cast played Japanese characters, with the exception of Hanako, who played a British sailor, making her entrance with a hornpipe and waving two British flags; and there was another revue gem in which Morton, as Puck, invoked the fairies, and they appeared in rags, being out of work because nobody wanted their services. This episode was, perhaps, the best thing Harry Grattan ever wrote.

The first act finished with three burlesque revues, English, French, and American. In the French revue Delysia was the *commère*. The American revue ended with a riotous finale led by Iris Hoey as the Belle of New York. Poor Iris! At the dress rehearsal she was in tears

PHOTOGRAPH OF MISTINGUETT

With the following inscription:—

"À Cochran ma très grande et profonde amitié,

MISTINGUETT.

18 *Mars* '23."

because Delysia appeared in scene after scene in fresh gorgeous costumes. The dresses I had chosen for Miss Hoey were suitable, and I had engaged her as a contrast to Delysia—who was nothing if not spectacular.

But nothing I could say would persuade Miss Hoey that she was not going to be a failure. I dwelt on the opportunities she had all through the revue ; but it always came back to " How can they look at me when Delysia comes on in such beautiful gowns ? "

At one time it was doubtful if I should get Miss Hoey on the stage on the opening night ; but I did, and she scored a triumph.

The outstanding success of *More* was unquestionably the Mid-Victorian romance, a pantomimic episode which Delysia, Morton, and eight girls did to a delightfully catchy tune. This episode was copied in three revues in Paris, and in some American productions.

At one war entertainment we did it before Queen Mary, Queen Alexandra, and Queen Amelie of Portugal. At Drury Lane, at a benefit organised by Lady Olive Greville, it was done by the Duchess of Westminster, who was coached by Delysia—with Morton and our girls as the *cocodés* and *cocodettes*.

The tune was played in every restaurant, and by every military band. An English composer had brought it to me, and it appeared on the programme under his name. One day I heard it played as part of a long march, and I had the curiosity to ask the bandmaster what he was playing. He showed me his conductor's copy, and I saw that it was a march, the name of which I have forgotten, by Sousa.

Mistinguett came from Paris especially to see the Mid-Victorian number. She reproduced it at the Folies-Bergères ; but there it lost the delicate charm and the pantomimic art imparted to it by Delysia and Morton.

Sir Herbert Tree dropped in at a *matinée* one day, and after that saw *More* at least half a dozen times. He told me that he considered Morton the best eccentric comedian

he had ever seen, and said he longed to see him play in classic French comedy. So much did the whole revue impress Sir Herbert that he paid me the compliment of asking me to produce a revue at His Majesty's Theatre—a revue in which he himself would play. Naturally I said it would be vastly interesting if he would produce a revue. His answer to that was that he would give me suggestions, but the actual production would have to be in my hands. I had several talks with Sir Herbert, and we got as far as discussing plans; but the project came to nothing, because he went to America and His Majesty's was sublet. I did, however, have the pleasure, later on, of presenting his daughter, Miss Viola Tree, in one of my revues. She appeared in a short sketch by E. F. Benson.

More was rapturously received at its first performance, and on the second night, and for a long time to come, we were sold out. The critics of the daily papers gave us good notices of the conventional type. Within a short time the high-class weeklies and special writers in the daily papers were treating *More* with a distinction that might have been accorded a comedy by Bernard Shaw.

I am inclined to think that Delysia and Morton were at this time the most popular players in London. Delysia had shown in *Odds and Ends* that she could do more than play *risque* comedy scenes, and display her figure in gorgeous gowns. When nearly all the great artists of the day—opera singers, musical comedy performers, revue artists, and music-hall singers—were singing Paul Rubens' recruiting song, "We don't want to lose you, but we think you ought to go," Rubens made no secret of it that Delysia was giving the song its most sympathetic interpretation. The work of players generally during the war cannot be over-estimated, but I doubt if any artist threw herself into the good work more than did Delysia. There was scarcely a war charity *matinée* at which she did not appear. But her noblest work was done without publicity. Never a day passed, not even a Sunday, when she did not entertain the wounded soldiers. Her home was an asylum for

French refugees, and on *matinée* days, going to her dressing-room, one was always in danger of stepping on crawling babies. She adopted, temporarily, numerous children. Two she still maintains and educates.

Delysia was not only a generous soul. She was most extravagant, although she would never admit it. She was an easy mark for people with something to sell. She could not resist what she called an " occasion."

Every Saturday afternoon there was a queue outside her dressing-room waiting for instalments on rugs, furs, shawls, pictures, and all sorts of useful and useless articles which she had bought on the instalment plan. She could never say " No." Often she found she was paying away more than she was receiving—although she was getting a very good salary—for things she did not really want.

Once a friend of hers discovered an alleged Boucher in a " junk " shop. The dealer wanted £200. Had the picture been genuine, it would have been worth thousands. I got experts to see it. They said it was an extremely good copy. But, even with them to help me, I had the greatest difficulty in dissuading Delysia from buying it. She had visions of selling it to the Louvre for about £5000.

Morton was an odd character. A man of a scientific bent of mind, he was always experimenting. He became interested in wireless telegraphy, and nearly got himself into trouble when he rigged up an apparatus on the roof of his flat.

He bought an organ far too large for the flat, so he moved his family to a large house in Brighton in order to accommodate the organ. In his early days he had been a conjurer, and he maintained an interest in mechanical tricks. Servais le Roy, and other makers of conjuring paraphernalia, were often in his dressing-room on Saturday afternoons collecting instalments on " property " tricks he had purchased from them. Harry Grattan and I, going to the Ambassadors' one morning, saw Morton roaming about the stage, all alone. Every now and then he bent down and pierced a small hole with some instrument he was carrying. The

theatre was dark, and he did not see us as we stood at the back of the circle. We found that he was preparing the stage for a levitation act, which he wanted us to introduce into the next revue. Finally, when re-engaging Morton for new productions, I inserted a clause in the contracts prohibiting him from doing conjuring tricks. As a conjurer he might have earned £8 a week. As a comedian he was a person of real distinction. Antoine, long before Sir Herbert Tree spoke of Morton's merits, desired him to play Molière. It was only long contracts at the Paris music-halls that prevented him from appearing at the Odeon.

After seeing *More* late in its run, Lord D'Abernon expressed surprise that Delysia and Morton remained unspoilt. He had, he said, found that French artists, like French cooks, could not stand transplantation ; invariably they lost their best Gallic qualities, and took on English defects. He declared Delysia and Morton to be brilliant exceptions.

It would be pleasant to write of this admirable pair at greater length, because few things that I have done in the theatre have given me more satisfaction than these early Ambassadors' revues. They gave London a new form of theatrical art. Their make-up has been copied and recopied, until the original is no longer visible in the reproduction.

Before I did another revue at the Ambassadors' I produced *Half-Past Eight* at the Comedy. This did not aim to be a revue. We called it " one of those musical things." The book was by Paul A. Rubens and C. H. Bovill, with music by Rubens. I began with a cast which included Will Evans, Millie Sim, Hugh E. Wright, Tommy Mostol, Yvonne Granville, who had been Delysia's understudy and had played her part in *Odds and Ends* on tour, and Estelle Winwood, whom I had taken from the Liverpool Repertory Company, and is now a star of the " legitimate," in America.

Paul Rubens did not see eye to eye with me as to the abilities of Estelle Winwood, and, owing to constant alterations at rehearsals, she did not get the opportunities I had

wished for her; but everything she did was a cameo. Rubens wrote some charming music for the production. On my last voyage across the Atlantic, the band was playing a selection which seemed reminiscent. I found that it was *Half-Past Eight*, and the bandmaster told me that, although out of date, it was still one of his most popular selections. In the second edition of *Half-Past Eight* I persuaded Miss Mabel Russell to return to the stage.

There was a curious experience with the Lord Chamberlain, at that time Lord Sandhurst. My Ambassadors' revues were always causing alarm at St. James's Palace; but at the Comedy I deliberately planned the piece for the girl of sixteen and the innocent young officer on leave. I was anxious for it not to conflict with the more exotic, cosmopolitan type of entertainment which had been popularised at the Ambassadors'. Save for a request not to have likenesses of certain eminent personages in a scene that touched on politics, the book of *Half-Past Eight* had been passed without comment by the Lord Chamberlain; while an official from the Department, who saw the show on the first night, agreed that the costumes and the general presentation were beyond reproach.

But at a moment when business had dropped, there appeared in the *Bystander* a page of caricatures which I considered attractive. I reproduced these caricatures as an advertisement in the *Evening News*. The effect was instantaneous. The very night the advertisement appeared we refused money for every part of the house. Next morning I was summoned to see Lord Sandhurst. He protested against this pictorial advertisement, and ordered the removal of a framed copy from the outside of the theatre.

I have looked at the caricatures since those days, and even now I cannot understand what was objectionable about them. The Lord Chamberlain said that the artist seemed deliberately to have created an effect of feminine garments being blown up.

This was the first, but not the only time that the Lord

Chamberlain objected to photographs of scenes from my revues that appeared in the *Sketch*, the *Tatler*, and other high-class illustrated papers. Lord Sandhurst told me once, I remember, that a bishop at his club showed him a picture in the *Sketch*, and asked if that was the sort of thing to allow in the theatres. He at once went to see the show, and found no harm in it. But he objected to the photograph.

Lord Sandhurst was always courteous, and he had the desire to be fair. But sometimes his views were difficult to understand. I might say, too, that the theatrical manager has little to guide him in regard to the censorship ; it is purely a question of individual taste. I consider my standard of taste to be as high as that of most people, and I have conscientiously avoided, in my productions, the vulgarity which I have seen rampant in other London shows.

During the run of *Watch Your Step* at the Empire, a surprise visit was paid by Lord and Lady Sandhurst. They had taken a box, and I and the people on the stage did not know they were there. At the end of the performance an attendant came to say that Lord Sandhurst would like to see me.

I went to the box, knowing that George Graves had been rather daring that night. Lord Sandhurst told me he had come because of numerous complaints about certain words and gestures used by Mr. George Graves, particularly in a scene where he danced with Miss Ethel Levey, and in the course of the dance removed a bunch of keys from one pocket to the other.

Lord Sandhurst said he had come to see the dance for himself, and, to assist him in making a fair judgment, he had brought Lady Sandhurst. They were delighted they had come ; they would be able now to refute the absurd criticisms with which the Lord Chamberlain's Department was being bombarded. Mr. Graves, he thought, was a comic genius, and he would like to be introduced to him.

So I took Lord Sandhurst " behind," and George Graves entertained him by playing upon him some of the tricks with which he often amused visitors to his dressing-room.

The Lord Chamberlain was given a glass of whisky-and-soda to drink in a glass that leaked. He was invited to look at some imaginary views through a telescope that left soot marks round his eyes.

When, later, I helped the late Lady Paget to organise a *matinée* for the British Red Cross—a performance at which the Queen was present—Lord Sandhurst asked that the dancing scene of George Graves and Ethel Levey should be included in the programme.

When first I met George Graves he was acting as assistant to a comedian named Tom Bassett, whose great song, in the character of " Sweeny Todd " was :

> " I polished them off, I polished them off,
> As soon as they sat in the chair ;
> They went down below, where the good niggers go,
> Singing, ' Tottie, I'll part your hair.' "

On 5th June 1916, one month after the production of *Half-Past Eight* at the Comedy, I staged my third revue at the Ambassadors'.

The success of *Odds and Ends* and *More* had made Harry Grattan an author much in demand. His fees had gone up to such an extent that I could no longer afford his services for the tiny Ambassadors'. *Pell Mell*, as I called the new revue, was by Fred Thompson and Morris Harvey, with music by Nat D. Ayer. The music of my previous revues had consisted largely of numbers gathered here and there, with a good sprinkling of tunes and ensembles composed by my resident musical director, Mr. Edward Jones, a good musician and a splendid comrade, whose death was mourned by all of us at the Ambassadors'.

In *Pell Mell* I again relied upon Delysia and Morton, and they were supplemented by Dorothy Minto and Nat D. Ayer, who made his début as an actor. Following the

lines of the successful Mid-Victorian romance, we introduced *A Fragonard Picture*. For this, Willie Redstone, the French composer, did some really fine music. Delysia and Morton gave an exquisite performance, but the pantomime was slightly more complicated than that of *More*, and it did not obliterate the memory of its predecessor. Simplicity of story is the keynote of success in miming. How many years have gone by without another *L'Enfant Prodigue*! And did not the simple story of *The Miracle*, as done at Olympia, have a direct appeal? When I saw *The Miracle* in New York the story had been so embroidered it was difficult to follow.

Dorothy Minto was a popular addition to the gallery of Ambassadors' favourites. She was born for the grease paint, and can always "get over" without much effort. She is a darling of the critics, who, whether they review her in Shaw or farcical comedy, invariably say, "When are we to see this clever actress in a part worthy of her abilities?"

The effectiveness of Dorothy Minto is unquestionable. But I have never known a well-known actress rehearse with less apparent interest in her work. In one scene in *Pell Mell* she had to draw up a chair, stand on it, put the hands of the clock back, get off the chair and put the chair away. More than once at rehearsal I have seen her first put the hands of the clock back, then get the chair and stand on it, and then get down. In other words, she was not thinking of what she was doing. Yet she always "got over." Moreover, she acted as if what she did was the creation of her own brain, which it was not.

It is curious how some of the most thoughtful and conscientious artists lack the gift of "getting over the footlights," while others, by sheer personal magnetism, can "hook up" audiences without using their headpiece at all.

Pell Mell had a ten months' run, which could have been extended, but Delysia was badly in need of a holiday; so in March I put on a mixed bill, a feature of which was

The Man Who Married a Dumb Wife. It was played by Lillah M'Carthy and a first-rate company, and the costume and scenic designs were by Robert Edmond Jones, who has done much to raise the prestige of the American stage in these matters (I showed a further example of his work in *Anna Christie*). Other items of the programme were *Class*, not very successful, but a brilliantly written play about the French Revolution, by Robert Vansittart; and *Gonzague*, a farce by Pierre Veber, which was done in French by Morton and an almost entirely French company, including that sound actress, Valentine Tessier, whose performances always make worth while a visit to the Vieux Colombier. Morton's performance was a monument of comic acting; he had played the part previously at the Palais Royal. From start to finish there was a ripple of laughter which frequently developed to a roar.

Some time later I did the play in English, at the London Pavilion, with Morton in his original part, and Sybil Thorndike in the part played by Valentine Tessier. But the humour seemed to have evaporated. Morton's struggle with our English tongue blurred what in French was a wonderful performance. Sybil Thorndike made us think of Mlle. Tessier.

In June of the same year I made a departure at the Ambassadors' by presenting Brieux's *The Three Daughters of M. Dupont.* Why this play was refused public performance when first submitted to the Lord Chamberlain is another of those mysteries which I have been unable to solve. The three daughters were played by Miss Ethel Irving, Miss Aimée de Burgh, and Miss Italia Conti. To Miss Conti I am indebted—I might say the London stage is indebted—for discovering and training many clever young players, including Mr. Noel Coward, Mr. Roy Royston, and Miss Doris Patston, for whom I predict a future. When, later, Mr. Leon M. Lion revived this play at the Garrick, the part of Caroline, played at the Ambassadors' by Miss Conti, was taken by Miss Edith Evans. Her performance was all that might be expected of the

brilliant actress who has since electrified London as Millamont in Congreve's *Way of the World*.

In November 1916 I opened the St. Martin's Theatre, of which I had taken a twenty-one years' lease. It was a small theatre, built by Lord Willoughby de Broke.

My opening production was a musical comedy, *Houp-La*, by Fred Thompson and Hugh F. Wright, with music by Nat D. Ayer and Howard Talbot; and the theatre world generally, and the West End in particular, were unusually interested because I began by charging a guinea for the stalls.

I had engaged Gertie Millar, George Graves, Ida Adams, Nat D. Ayer, Hugh E. Wright, a French actress new to London, Madeline Choiseuille—and perhaps the prettiest collection of girls ever seen on any stage in the world. The show-girls, and those who played small parts, were Margot Erskine (now Mrs. Bendir, the well-known racehorse owner), Elsie Scott, Mabel Buckley, Violet Leicester (now a countess), Pepita Bobadilla (who became Mrs. Haddon Chambers), Binnie Hale, Ivy Tresmand, Mollie Ramsden, Elizabeth Beerbohm, Vera Neville (then Mrs. Tommy Graves and now Mrs. Hill), and Valerie May, who married a well-known airman. In the chorus were Mollie Vere and Olive Atkinson, who, as I have mentioned before, won a beauty-prize at Berlin when she was one of Kaufmann's cycle girls.

I abandoned the experiment of the guinea stalls after the first week. It was not so much that the policy was wrong for a small theatre with big "stars," as that the show was not up to the guinea mark. Had I instituted guinea stalls during the run of *More* at the Ambassadors' I think the experiment would have been successful.

Although during that one week we played to more money than we did afterwards, we had the disadvantage of a grumbling, unenthusiastic public. The play went twice as well with the half-guinea audience as it did with the people who paid a guinea. To be able to command a guinea for the stalls, a "fizzing" success was necessary;

and although *Houp-La* was in many ways better than most musical comedies of its time, and, from the point of view of production and beauty, superior to most one sees nowadays, it was not a " knock-out " success. I was handicapped, too, by the illness of Paul Rubens, who had started to help with the book and to do the music in conjunction with Nat D. Ayer—a happy combination. But poor Rubens was to do no more work, and I had to call in Fred Thompson to help Hugh E. Wright with the book, and Howard Talbot to join Ayer with the music.

When Paul Rubens died, it was indeed a loss to our lighter stage.

Houp-La created a demand for the high-priced chorus-girl and show-lady. Alfred Butt instructed his lieutenants to get the pick of my girls from the St. Martin's, even if they cost double the salary of the ordinary chorus-girl.

One Sunday night at Ciro's I met one of the most attractive of the small-part girls. She was dining with her husband and another young man, with whom she was exceedingly friendly. The next night at the theatre she said to me, " Wasn't it funny, the party last night? Who do you think paid the bill? "

" You, I suppose," I said.

" No," she replied. " Colonel —— has left orders at Ciro's that I can sign all bills in his name."

I asked if her husband and her friend knew this. " Yes," she answered, with a laugh, " and I will give Jack " (her husband) " credit; he did say, ' Aren't we a couple of awful bounders! ' and that made Harry " (her lover) " ever so angry."

In *Houp-La* I introduced a more complete French revue than I had done in *More* at the Ambassadors'. The *compère*, Miss Vera Neville, and the *commère*, Miss Valerie May, were dreams of beauty. I fancy that the beautiful legs of Miss Neville sold many a stall. And she had never worn tights before! At the dress rehearsal Gertie Millar had to show her how to put them on, and how to keep the wrinkles out.

Binnie Hale got her first chance in *Houp-La.* She was understudy to Ida Adams. Never did an understudy make a more harassing début. Miss Adams had insisted on paying for her own clothes, but she stipulated that no understudy should wear them; and I am afraid I had neglected to buy dresses for the understudy. So one night, when Binnie had to go on, there was nothing for her to wear.

Ida Adams was appealed to, but would not budge from her rights. The good nature of Delysia saved a most awkward situation. It was a short run from the St. Martin's stage door to the Ambassadors', and Delysia found something fresh for Miss Hale to wear for every entrance she had to make. Not only did Delysia find the clothes—she helped to dress Miss Hale.

To follow *Houp-La* I arranged with Mr. James Bernard Fagan to produce John Pollock's adaptation of *Les Avariés*, by Eugène Brieux, called in its English form, *Damaged Goods*, and it had a nine-months' run. Thus I was presenting two Brieux plays simultaneously at next-door theatres.

The salaries of Delysia and Morton had now outgrown the capacity of the Ambassadors' Theatre. Within a few weeks of her opening with me in *Odds and Ends* Delysia was receiving offers from other managements. She had no written contract with me. One offer of 500 dollars a week came for America from Mr. Dillingham, and she asked my advice. I told her that I could not compete with such an offer, but I would give her £20 a week instead of the £6 she was receiving; and if she would stick to me I was sure that within five years I would get her five times the 500 dollars.

And, as I will show later, I was able to keep that promise.

Under our new arrangement Delysia was getting £50 a week in the third year of her engagement with me; but her value had become so great that I did not consider this a fair contract, and at the end of *Pell Mell* I promised her £100 a week for her next engagement.

The Ambassadors' would not stand three-figure salaries, together with the costly productions it was now compelled to put on to keep pace with the numerous small revues that were being presented at other theatres.

I decided, therefore, to abandon revue in time. I took the Prince of Wales' Theatre, and, on 22nd August 1917, produced there *Carminetta*, which was an adaptation, by Monckton Hoffe, from the French of André Barde and C. A. Carpentier, with a very beautiful score by Emile Lassailly, a brilliant musician, who, I regret to say, has now passed away. Lassailly had conducted Offenbach at the memorable revivals at the Variétés, Paris, and was a disciple of the grand old man of operette. His music had the qualities of sparkle and—so rare in the Viennese scores—humour. There were extra numbers by the two Hermans, Finck and Darewski, and Leon M. Lion staged the play for me. For this production I introduced a new artist to design the scenes and the costumes—Miss Maynard. Her work was a success; but I believe she has done nothing further for the theatre.

In *Carminetta* Delysia proved herself to be an operette artist of exceptional ability, despite the fact that her voice was untrained. She was a little weak in her middle register, but her top notes were true and sweet, and her acting was a revelation. She held the house breathless in her " Farewell " song, which finished the play. The heroine of a musical play singing a sad song all alone on the stage at the fall of the curtain—it was an experiment severely criticised by those associated with me in the production. But it was successful, because it depended upon an artist who did not fail.

Seymour Hicks, standing at the back of the dress circle one afternoon, turned to me and said, " That is the best actress I have seen for many years. I'd like to see her play *Camille.*"

Robert Keable, the author of *Simon called Peter*, made mention of Delysia's performance in his book. His hero, Peter, a padré, brought Julie, a V.A.D., to a suite of rooms

in a West End hotel. They dined, and went to see *Carminetta*. When Delysia came on the stage, Julie said :

> " Oh, she is perfect, Peter—a little bit of life ! Look how she shakes her hair back, and how impudent she is. And she's boiling passion, too. . . . I love her, Peter."

The book goes on : " They watched while Carminetta set herself to win her bet and steal the heart of the hero from the Governor's daughter. They watched her force the palace ballroom. The whole house grew still. The English girl, with her beauty, her civilisation, her rank and grace, made her appeal to her fiancé ; and the Spanish bastard dancer, with her daring, her passion, her naked humanity, so coarse, and so intensely human, made her appeal also. And they watched while the young, conventionally bred officer hesitated ; they watched till Carminetta won."

Mr. Keable, who was formerly a Church of England clergyman, and has written a number of books on ecclesiastical matters, told me that it was Delysia's performance in *Carminetta* that gave him the inspiration for the heroine's act of self-sacrifice which concludes his novel.

Marie Blanche was the Governor's daughter, and the part of the young officer allowed us to see Dennis Neilson-Terry as an actor-vocalist. Morton had the leading comedy part, but he did not repeat in it the success he had achieved in the Ambassadors' revues. Although he had been in England for three years, and had married an English wife, he could not master our language. At the Ambassadors' we had been able to supply him with characters and situations which did not make any call upon his linguistic resources.

Curiously enough, Morton was a success in Liverpool, where we gave *Carminetta* a week's " try out." I had told him on the train not to be disappointed if a provincial audience didn't take him to their hearts. I was preparing him for a different reception from that to which he was

accustomed at the Ambassadors'. "It will mean nothing," I said, "if they don't laugh at you." But everything he did at Liverpool was a smashing hit. Towards the latter part of the week, one of the Liverpool papers had a leading article on the art of the comedian, holding up Morton as an example to be followed by his English colleagues. The article, in fact, mentioned the names of half a dozen or more English comedians who would profit by studying the methods of Morton. This so elated Morton that, in a measure, I think it affected his performance in London. But, on the opening night at the Prince of Wales', what had got a roar in Liverpool didn't get a titter in London. And, instead of battling, Morton got his tail down. He was convinced he had a bad part, and in *Carminetta* he never gave us of his best.

I will tell another curious side story of *Carminetta*. At the first performance at Liverpool it was obvious that there was an anti-climax. At one moment in the last act the people thought the play was over, and began groping for their hats and coats. A difficult situation, which we had missed at rehearsal, was obvious when seen at a public performance. Still, it was a question only of the interpolation of a few lines, and Mr. Monckton Hoffe agreed to see to this.

But on the last day of our engagement at Liverpool, when I expected Mr. Hoffe to put the few lines into rehearsal, and try them at the *matinée* and night performances, I found that he had left for London. So I got my stage director, Mr. Leon M. Lion, to make the change of dialogue, which did away with the anti-climax.

On the morning of the London production, Mr. Monckton Hoffe called at the Prince of Wales' Theatre, asked to see the changes in the script, made no comment, and went away.

That night, in the vestibule of the theatre, after the play had received a stirring reception, my wife, seeing Mr. Hoffe, went up to congratulate him. To her astonishment

he showed excitement and, in a loud voice, said that I was a blackguard and had ruined his play.

Naturally, Mrs. Cochran was upset, and so was I ; and Monckton Hoffe and I did not speak until the latter part of 1920, when I became seriously ill. Then Monckton Hoffe was among the first to call on my wife, expressing an earnest wish for my recovery, and sending me the kindest of messages.

I have a great regard for Monckton Hoffe as a dramatist ; and he is something of a character. While we were concocting *Carminetta*, Hoffe and his beautiful wife, Barbara, came to lunch at a cottage I had taken at Cookham. We were on the lawn playing croquet when I mentioned that a certain actor was joining the party. " Then," said Hoffe, " we will go. He is not a man to whom one can introduce one's wife." And nothing would persuade him to stay.

Hoffe has a habit, at rehearsals, of not giving a decision when appealed to by the producer for a reading which does not seem clear. Instead of giving his views there and then, he is apt to say, " I will take the script home and write you about it." This happened once or twice when Charles Hawtrey was rehearsing one of Hoffe's plays. Hawtrey got annoyed, and when he met Golding Bright, the play agent, said, " I do wish, even if Hoffe doesn't write his plays, that he would read them."

Robert Cunningham, whom I last saw giving an excellent performance as the Archbishop in Shaw's *Saint Joan*, played in *Carminetta*. He was the toreador, Escamillo, grown old. Miss Maynard, in her costume design, had given him gaiters, which he wore at Liverpool.

On our last day at Liverpool he told my acting manager that he must have an interview with me on a very serious matter. The appointment was made. He came to keep it in a state of great perturbation. The matter, he said, might seem small to me, but it was of the utmost importance to him. He had his professional reputation to think of.

As a manager of experience I divined that he was going

to complain of the size of the type in which his name was billed.

But I was wrong. Cunningham went on to say that certain artists had certain assets, and it was important that the manager should allow those assets to be displayed to the best possible advantage. Coming to the point, he concluded, "I must not wear those gaiters in London. In Australia, articles were written about the symmetry of my legs."

I agreed to cut the gaiters.

On 29th January 1918, Robert de Flers, the French dramatist and Academician, found himself in London in his country's interests, and he spent the evening seeing *Carminetta*. I recall the date, because on the following day he sent me a copy of *Le Roi*, the brilliant four-act comedy which, in 1924, was done in English at His Majesty's Theatre, and proved to be a disappointing production. The book M. de Flers sent me bears the inscription :

"À M. COCHRAN, en bien sympathique souvenir,
ROBERT DE FLERS. Londres, 30th Janvier 1918."

M. de Flers had known Delysia, but he had never seen her act, and the praise, qualified by valuable criticism, which he bestowed upon Delysia personally, was, I believe, more gratifying to her than most other tokens of approval which she so generally received. For Robert de Flers meant to her the French Theatre, which conservative institution had no knowledge of her existence. The sincerity of de Flers was proved by his asking me to do *Le Roi*, with Delysia in the part created by Lavallière. Some weeks later I received from him a letter, in which he expressed regret that he had discovered from the Authors' Society that the English rights of the play had been disposed of some time previously. It was my privilege to see an early production of *Le Roi* at the Variétés in 1908. Surely comedy acting has never reached greater heights ! What a cast ! And how they made the wit sparkle—Brasseur, Guy, Max Dearly, Prince, Max Linder—the

two latter now famous as cinema stars—Lavallière and Marcelle Lender. I saw *Le Roi* revived at the same theatre a year or so ago, with Spinelly in Lavallière's part. I laughed almost as heartily as I did the first time I saw the play.

Robert de Flers told me that King Edward, on one of several visits to the Variétés, said, "I always come and laugh at your play in Paris, but I shall certainly tell my Lord Chamberlain not to allow it to be put on in London."

The names of Eve Lavallière and Robert de Flers recall something told me by Mr. Valentine Williams, the novelist.

A new play by de Flers was about to be produced, and Lavallière was spoken of for a part. None of her old comrades had seen her for several years. Various stories of her retirement to a convent had appeared in the world's press. A small circle knew her whereabouts, and her friends decided that de Flers should call on her. He found Lavallière a grey-haired old lady, tending flowers in the garden of a humble cottage. She recognised him, and expressed pleasure at seeing him. She talked of her garden and the effect of frost upon some of her prized plants. They passed an hour or so together, and de Flers left—without even mentioning his plan to get her to return to the theatre.

I believe that Lavallière's last appearance was in *Carminetta* at the Theatre Michel. Before that I introduced her into *Odds and Ends*, towards the end of its run at the Ambassadors', in a short one-act play, *Dieu que les hommes sont bêtes*. She made her début on the night of the *Lusitania* disaster, so it was not to be wondered at that, brilliant though her performance was, it went almost unnoticed at the time, and is remembered by few.

The last production with which I was concerned at the Ambassadors' was *Wonder Tales*, presented in conjunction with James Bernard Fagan (who did the actual work of production) on 22nd December 1917.

Mary Grey (Mrs. J. B. Fagan) sang and acted well,

and looked a very handsome though a somewhat statuesque fairy. Nobody laughed more heartily than she did when, at a *matinée*, at which the house was crowded with children, a shrill voice rang out with, " Oh, Daddy ! What a big fairy ! " as Mary Grey came up through the little Ambassadors' stage on a very wobbly trap.

In 1918 I sold my lease of the Ambassadors' Theatre to Captain H. M. Harwood, the present lessee.

CHAPTER XXIII

The Story of the Production of *The Better 'Ole*—War Play without False Heroics—Walter Hackett's View—Bourchier and Bairnsfather—The Note that upset Frank Collins—Sir Henry Tozer advises a Male Quartette—How he led the King into the Palace Theatre—Miss Sybil Thorndike's Part in *Les Gosses dans les Ruines*—The Box-Office Value of Delysia in *As You Were*—How I increased the London Pavilion Profits—Delysia offered 2500 Dollars a Week by Norman Gest—*In the Night Watch*—An Unfortunate Point of Difference with Miss Madge Titheradge.

THE Holy Week of 1918 I spent with my wife at the Norfolk Hotel, Brighton. I had taken with me two plays to read—*The Voice from the Minaret*, by Robert Hichens, and *The Better 'Ole*, by Captain Bruce Bairnsfather and Captain Arthur Eliot. This latter play had been turned down by Alfred Butt, by de Courville, and by André Charlot. The night before Good Friday I read *The Better 'Ole*, and my wife asked me what was making me laugh so much. I read it to her. She laughed as I had done, and sometimes our laughter came through tears. I put the book down and said, "I shall do this play, but it's a question of getting the right theatre. I should like the Oxford Music-Hall. That is a theatre with an atmosphere redolent of 'Old Bill' and beer. The two must go together."

Frank Collins, my loyal and most able stage director, who was with me for ten years, lived at Brighton, and came in to have tea with us on Good Friday afternoon. Seeing two plays on my desk he asked if he might take them home. I made no comment about either play. On the Sunday he brought them back. "The play," he said, "would, I think, have a good chance, providing the mental attitude of the hero could be made clearer in the last act. I can't understand what he's driving at."

"Which play are you talking about," I asked.

"Why, *The Voice from the Minaret,* of course," he said. "As for that other piffle, a schoolboy of fourteen could write a better play than that."

"That is the one I am going to produce," I said.

He looked at me in amazement.

Now, Collins was quite right. Technically speaking, *The Better 'Ole* was about as crude a play as ever gained the distinction of a West End production. It was lacking in construction, and the story was not only puerile, but dropped out half-way through the play. But three hundred of the best jokes enacted during the war ran through the play; and also there were the Bairnsfather types, "Old Bill," "Bert," and "Alf," which stood for the optimistic philosophy of "Tommy" in the tremendous conflict. Who, for instance, at the epoch of which I am writing, could resist these lines:

OLD BILL: "It must be dangerous mucking about in them munition factories at home."

OLD BILL: "When the war's over, I'm going to change my name to 'Enery.'"

BERT: "Why?"

OLD BILL: "Why? Cos the blinking Kaiser 'asn't 'arf made a mess of the name of William."

(*Noise of bombing heard in the distance.*)

ALF: "What's that?"

OLD BILL: "That's the gong for dinner."

OLD BILL (*writing home*): "Thank the parson's wife for the socks she sent me. One I'm using as a Balaclava helmet, the other I keep my change of clothes in."

(*Terrific shelling heard.*)

OLD BILL: "It's times like these that make Victoria Station seem a 'ell of a way off."

It was the exact psychological moment for a war play without false heroics. The appeal of *The Better 'Ole* lay in its very simplicity. Very little alteration was made in the script when it was played at the Oxford. I resisted the many suggestions made to have it rewritten, and to make of it a real play. Some time after it had started its enormously successful run at the Oxford I asked Frank

Collins, over a second old brandy after dinner, whether after reading the play he had discussed it with my general manager, Clive McKee. I remember his reply. He said he had told McKee that often I did things which made him think I was crazy, but when I told him I was going to produce *The Better 'Ole* he felt sure of it. And I will say now that after the douche administered to my judgment by Frank Collins, I was afraid not only to show the script to any other expert, but I didn't read it again, fearing that a further reading might make me realise too fully its technical shortcomings. Two months went by before I again opened the script, when I was in the train travelling to Edinburgh with Walter Hackett, the dramatist. Again I found myself laughing. Hackett asked me to let him have a look. With real anxiety I handed the script to him. He read it from beginning to end, and his laughter was punctuated with such remarks as "Great stuff!"—"Sure fire!" Returning it to me he said, "This play can't fail. You have got a fortune."

On the Sunday after I had read *The Better 'Ole* I met on the front at Brighton Ernest Edelsten, the variety agent, and a member of the producing firm of Wylie & Tate. When first I knew Edelsten he was married to a minor music-hall artist, Margaret Broadfoot. He was on the fringe of the entertainment business, being what in those days was called a "music carrier," that is to say, he was invariably around the music-halls where his wife was appearing, and would hand in her band parts at rehearsal on Monday mornings, and collect them on Saturday nights. Since then he has, I suppose, made more money out of music-hall agency than anybody.

I told Edelsten that I had a show I wanted to do at the Oxford. I did not want to approach the directors myself, as I was afraid they would treat me as a West End manager, and probably be rather difficult about terms. Edelsten, therefore, conducted the early negotiations, and then put me in touch with the Board, all of whom were very old friends of mine. The contract was arranged, and I stipu-

lated for permission to cover the lobbies of the Oxford with imitation sandbags, to make a dug-out of the box office, and in all sorts of ways to create what I thought would be a proper atmosphere for the play. I should have been worried if called on to produce *The Better 'Ole* in a theatre where I should be restricted from " circusing " it.

The Oxford at this time had sunk pretty low in the matter of receipts, and I imagine that at any time in its career £1000 a week was very big business. My eyes were wide open to this when I closed my deal. I saw big money or entire fiasco in *The Better 'Ole.*

John Humphries had given a masterly performance of Old Bill in a short sketch in a revue, and I could conceive of nobody playing it better, if as well. At the same time I felt that Humphries had not a West End name. I set about, therefore, engaging Mr. Arthur Bourchier at a salary of £100 per week. The combination of Bourchier, Bairnsfather, and the Oxford Music-Hall appeared to be sufficiently curious to attract attention in advance, and so it did. Bourchier's performance was adequate, but he was never the ideal Old Bill. His tendency was to " clown " the part, and to eliminate the human side of it. He found difficulty, too, in settling on a dialect. One of the critics said that the dialect he did use " travelled from Devonshire to Yorkshire, and back to Somerset by way of Maine ! "

Herman Darewski did the music, and wrote some excellent numbers which were right in the spirit of the play. Captain Bruce Bairnsfather was most helpful in the production—never was I associated with a more modest genius—and Frank Collins, who, as I have already said, thought nothing of the play when he read it, put his back into the production, and I attribute a great deal of the overwhelming success of the first performance to his patient and painstaking work at rehearsals.

When I engaged Mr. Bourchier it was understood that he was not to be bothered with the production of the play. Nevertheless he stipulated that the following note should appear in the programme :

"Mr. Cochran wishes to acknowledge his indebtedness to Mr. Bourchier for producing the play on his behalf."

When Frank Collins saw this he was very upset about it; but I explained my difficulty, and he took it in good part.

Two nights before the production the show looked hopeless, and so it was, as seen that night. I remember I ran from the stalls to the dress circle, from the dress circle to the upper circle, and from the upper circle back again to the stalls to avoid the criticisms and suggestions of the Oxford directorate who were present. Nobody appreciates helpful criticism more than I do, but there is nothing more irritating than obvious faults pointed out by several different people.

This is the sort of thing I mean. In a Louis XV. scene, perhaps, at a dress rehearsal, one of the chairs to be used will not have arrived from the upholsterers, and the property man temporarily has put in its place a Windsor chair. After five people, with great tact, have suggested that, although not great authorities, they do not think the Windsor chair is *quite* in the period, one feels in a mood for murder at the approach of the sixth. That was the sort of criticism I ran from at the rehearsal of *The Better 'Ole*.

Darewski, Bairnsfather, Collins, Eliot, and myself repaired to Darewski's flat after this rehearsal, and had a heart-to-heart talk. A plan of campaign was arranged for the following day. Our main fear was Bourchier, and it was agreed that Bairnsfather should practically live with him until the first performance. Bairnsfather had already supplied Mr. Bourchier with pictures of "Old Bill," which he begged him always to have near at hand; he had talked "Old Bill," and had done his best to explain what Old Bill stood for; it was on the day of the dress rehearsal that for the first time he gave the slightest expression of dissatisfaction at my production of his play. "You have made a mistake in engaging Bourchier," he said. I assured

him that it would be all right, although the dress rehearsal had been very " sloppy." At the dress rehearsal I had had a glimpse of the play as I had visualised it when I read it.

Mr. S. R. Littlewood, who was to write the notice for the *Referee*, had asked to see the dress rehearsal, as he felt that the performance on Saturday would not give him time to report the play at the length he would like to give it. I shall ever be grateful to Mr. Littlewood for the suggestions and criticisms he gave me at this rehearsal.

I had arranged with the proprietors of the *Bystander* to supply me with magic-lantern slides of Bairnsfather's cartoons, and these were to be shown during the playing of the overture ; but, somehow or other, the arrangement had been overlooked, and not long before the overture was due on the first night, when I asked for the slides, nobody knew anything about them. A few minutes later they were discovered ; but there was no magic-lantern operator. Hurriedly the stage electrician was sent up to the cinema box. There was not time to arrange the slides in their proper order ; but the electrician got on with the job, putting in some of the slides upside down. That I insisted upon the slides being shown was fortunate. As each new one was presented a roar of laughter went up. The band played " Tipperary " and other soldier songs lustily. In the vestibule, during the overture, I ran into Walter Payne. " What do you think of your chances ? " he said ; and I replied, " I wouldn't take £10,000 for half my share."

I went to my box during the last bars of the overture, and Fred Thompson, who was sitting there with my wife, said, " You have got a hit before the curtain goes up. Look at the audience." And, indeed, people seemed in the right frame of mind. From the moment the curtain went up until its fall there were volleys of laughter. Also, of course, there came those moments which brought a gulp in the throat. Such a passage was in the scene where the postman arrived bringing no letters for Bill, Bert, and Alf. As rehearsed and as played on the first night, this was most poignant pantomime. Not a soul in the house but felt

the pathos of it. But the scene got spoilt afterwards by the attempts to get laughs by Bill, Bert, and Alf.

The shout for Bairnsfather at the close was so genuine that, although he had intended not to take a call, he clambered over the orchestra rail, and the house stood up and cheered him.

The press criticisms were good, but in no way reflected the spirit of the house. They were on a par with those accorded a few weeks previously to a war burlesque, *Over the Top*, which also was presented at the Oxford: "The sort of play which will please an Oxford audience." "*The Better 'Ole* should amuse Oxford patrons for some weeks to come." "A rollicking entertainment which is bound to please the public at this time."

It was some time before the editors of the dailies and of the Sunday papers realised that something was happening at the Oxford. *The Better 'Ole* was quoted in editorials, and there were special articles. A week after the production the *Weekly Dispatch* printed an article by Max Pemberton headed, "A Real War Play at last." Mr. Pemberton wrote: "This is the third propaganda play which that really great showman, Mr. C. B. Cochran, has produced, and, like the other two, it destroys every convention dear to the heart of the ancient house of Crummles. Yet it is a success beyond expectation. Nightly you may see guardsmen laughing and little milliners' assistants weeping, and hear the cheers of the men in khaki, *who know*. Mother and son, the son who fought, sit side by side, and hold hands. And he tells her proudly, 'It was just like that out there.' Yes, it was and is just like that out there, and no surer tribute could be paid."

Concluding a column article, Mr. Pemberton said: "A great entertainment, in brief; a review of the war most admirable. It will be a prodigious success in America and the far lands. We have had nothing like it, I repeat, and assuredly there is that here which will make the whole civilised world akin."

Mr. Pemberton proved to be a true prophet. *The*

Better 'Ole repeated its success in America, in Australia, Scotland, Ireland, Wales, and in the large and small towns of England except, curiously enough, in Lancashire. A success in Manchester, *The Better 'Ole* failed at Oldham, Wigan, Bolton, and Blackburn.

The first week at the Oxford we played to £2753, 15s. By the fourth week we had reached £3065. *The Better 'Ole* ran for 817 performances. Five companies went into the provinces, and five companies played it in the U.S.A.

I offered the American rights first to my old friend, William A. Brady, but he declined them. The script passed from one manager's office to another, but was turned down. George M. Cohan did not " give it a chance." Only one manager believed in the play. That was George Tyler, but he wrote me that he was not in a financial position to take the risk of production. Conditions made it impossible for me to go to New York and produce the play myself, and I was about to arrange with Tyler to produce at my risk, when I received an offer, from a manager of whom I had never heard, to produce the play at a theatre which was unknown to me. He was willing to pay the terms which other managers had rejected, and so, through Mr. Golding Bright, a contract was made. The play was produced at the Greenwich Village Theatre by Mr. Charles Coburn, and was immediately successful. The Greenwich Village was a tiny theatre which would hold only 5000 to 6000 dollars per week. It seemed like a good property wasted, when Mr. Coburn moved the play up town to the Booth Theatre, where it played to capacity. When the actors' strike came, *The Better 'Ole* was, I believe, the last play to be withdrawn. Without the strike it is impossible to say how long the play would have run. It was given all over the United States, with almost unvarying success.

A few weeks after, *The Better 'Ole* at the Oxford became town talk; my old friend, George McLellan, telephoned me late one night to say he had been present at a conversation which had distressed him more than he could say, and he was very anxious to put me on my guard. Albert de Cour-

ville was claiming that he had an option on Bruce Bairnsfather's dramatic output, and that under this option *The Better 'Ole* should have been submitted to him. McLellan went on to say that the matter had been placed before the Moss Empires directorate, and they had determined to apply for an injunction.

Happily my sleep was not disturbed. Mr. M'Farland of the *Bystander*, who acted as business representative for Bairnsfather, had told me of this option, the terms of which had been faithfully carried out by Bairnsfather. Evidently de Courville had forgotten the circumstance, but *The Better 'Ole* had been submitted to him, and he had returned it without comment. M'Farland wisely foresaw that, should the play be produced, this option might be thought of, and he was not satisfied until he had got a letter from de Courville, stating that he had read the play, and that the play was useless to him. Bairnsfather did receive a solicitor's letter, but de Courville's letter rejecting the play was produced, and, of course, the matter went no further.

I didn't see Mr. Coburn play "Old Bill," but Bairnsfather wrote me from America that he thought he gave the best representation of the character. The best "Old Bill" I saw was John Humphries. Ambrose Manning was the next best, and Harry Wenman, who often played the part at the Oxford, was also very good. Tom Wootwell, who played "Bert" at the Oxford, gave the most lifelike performance of any Bairnsfather creation, better even than John Humphries' "Old Bill." Wootwell was for many years a popular comic singer, and had been originally one of the Girard Troupe of legmania artists.

After the first performance at the Oxford, Mr. Henry Tozer, who later was knighted, came, as chairman of the Oxford company, to offer me his congratulations on what he was sure would be a very big success if only I would add a male quartette. "They always like a male quartette at the Oxford," he said by way of explanation.

Months afterwards, when *The Better 'Ole* was crowding the Oxford twice daily, I met him in the bar. Again he

shook his head and said, " Cochran, take an old man's advice : engage a male quartette and you will get a much longer run for *The Better 'Ole.*"

As a showman, Henry Tozer was out of date, and when, after the death of George Adney Payne, he took an active part in the management of the Syndicate Halls—the Oxford, Pavilion, and Tivoli—they declined ; and his only policy when receipts decreased was to cut down expenses. But he was a pleasant man, and I passed many a happy hour with him at the Oxford. His knighthood caused some jealousy in the amusement profession. The honour was expected in other quarters.

He told me how once he received Royalty by mistake, and unintentionally trod on the toes of Mr. Alfred Butt. It was at a variety artists' command performance at the Palace Theatre. A committee of music-hall magnates that included Tozer had been formed, and the members of this committee wore a badge which gave them the right to ramble all over the house without molestation. Wandering about in this way, Tozer came upon a passage he had not noticed before, which led to a door in Shaftesbury Avenue. Curiosity prompted him to walk down this passage, and just as he found himself on the street, up drove the Royal carriage. The King stepped out, saw Mr. Tozer, and walked straight over to him and held out his hand. Mr. Tozer had been presented to His Majesty a few days previously as a member of the Westminster Housing Committee.

All that Mr. Tozer could do was to conduct their Majesties to the Royal Box, where Mr. Butt was awaiting to be warned of their arrival. You can imagine Butt's surprise when he saw the King and Queen approaching the entrance to the box, talking affably to Mr. Tozer. Tozer asked permission to present Mr. Butt ; and the King shook hands with him and then continued his conversation, which lasted some time, with Tozer. Tozer told me he was sure that the King thought Butt was his assistant manager.

One night, during the run of *The Better 'Ole*, Arthur

Bourchier said to me, " Charles, I want to have a serious talk with you." He came to my house, and, after supper, said, " I have decided never again to undertake the cares of management. I shall make a tour each year for the next three years, with a short season in London, and then I shall make my farewell tour. I want to give you the first chance of taking over the management. Perhaps," he went on, " there will not be an enormous amount of money in the first three tours, but think of the opportunity I am giving you when I offer you, as I do, a half-share of the profits in my farewell tour."

" Arthur," I replied, " I thank you for the offer, and I will think the matter over."

This apparently was not the answer he expected. He rose from his seat, folded his arms, looked me squarely in the face and said, " Charles, I am a great actor."

He paused and continued, " Yes, I am a very great actor."

I was so astonished at this declaration that for the moment I said nothing. I cannot have looked convinced, because Bourchier followed up his declaration by adding, " Ah, I see you don't think so, but the perspective of time will show, when theatrical history is written. In time to come, Irving will be recalled, followed by a gap, and then Arthur Bourchier."

" Won't you give Tree a place ? " I asked.

" An ephemeral success which will not be remembered," was the reply.

Arthur Bourchier was most obviously sincere, and it is unquestionable that self-confidence is an asset in an actor's composition. Sir Gerald du Maurier and Mr. Seymour Hicks may remember my mentioning this conversation to them over luncheon at the Café Royal the next day.

The Poulbot drawings of children playing at soldiers were to France in 1918 what the Bairnsfather cartoons were to England. A play founded on the cartoons of Poulbot, *Les Gosses dans les Ruines*, was presented at the Theatre des Arts, Paris. I acquired the rights for London, and arranged with Poulbot to design the scenery and come

PAINTING BY POULBOT

Presented to Mrs. Charles B. Cochran by the Artist.

over to superintend the production. I was reading the French script on the boat-train, and was alone in a first-class smoking compartment, when, at one of the Kent stations between Folkestone and London, a brigadier-general got in. We got into conversation, and talked about plays then running in Paris.

" You are not, by chance, Charles Cochran ? " he asked, and when I told him I was, he spoke of a brother who once was on the stage and of a nephew who still acted. I knew them both. His brother, whose stage name was Chamberlain, had produced *Morocco Bound* years before at the Shaftesbury Theatre. His nephew was the comedian, Jack Cannot. He himself was Brigadier-General Cannot, and he was doing liaison work with the French army. The sequel of this chance meeting was that General Cannot adapted *Les Gosses dans les Ruines* for me, and Poulbot's play was interpolated in *The Better 'Ole* in this way. Bill, Bert, and Alf were sitting in the trenches talking of England. " Thank God," said Bill, " our 'omes are still standing."

And as he told of what he had seen in a French village, the lights faded and the Poulbot interlude was played.

This little play is memorable as introducing to the West End stage Miss Sybil Thorndike, whom I had engaged from the Old Vic. Her performance at the Oxford was a little too restless. She had at that time a number of mannerisms and lacked repose. Her voice also lacked flexibility. But she was a conscientious artist, and a charming woman to be associated with.

Poulbot stayed with us at Aldford Street during the early part of the run of his play at the Oxford. Now he is the uncrowned king of Montmartre.

In the spring of 1918 I arranged with my friend Mr. Walter Payne to take over the London Pavilion on a rental and sharing arrangement. The last weeks the London Pavilion was open under the old management, the variety entertainments presented included Marie Lloyd, Grock, Maud Allan, and other stars—yet the receipts only averaged a few hundreds a week.

I closed the Pavilion for a month, took down the mirrors, tore away the gold angels, and converted the place into a jewel of a theatre. On 3rd August I opened with a revue which Arthur Wimperis adapted from Rips' *Plus ça Change*; we called it *As You Were*. The music was by Herman Darewski, and Paul Poiret did the dresses. *As You Were* ran until 30th August 1919—thirteen months. Wimperis gave me, perhaps, the wittiest book he has ever written. Herman Darewski never wrote better tunes than "If you could care for me," "Ninon," and "Two Little Maids from Greece"; and Delysia had her great chance in revue as the modern lady of fashion, as Ninon de l'Enclos, Helen of Troy, Queen Elizabeth, and Cleopatra. George Graves said to me after the first performance: "What a marvellous woman! She never puts a foot wrong. She cannot make a mistake."

Delysia gave the witty lines of Wimperis every ounce of their value. What a laugh went up when, as Ninon, she used to say to John Humphries: "Are you single, married, or in Paris on leave?"

John Humphries was admirable as the *nouveau riche*. Fed up with the infidelity of his wife, and fed up with the war, he bought from a scientist a pill which was to transport him back through the ages to the times when "women were faithful, and there was no war." Morton had a small part, but was excellent as the lover who, to the strains of "If you could care for me," in all ages turned up when Humphries felt that at last he had found a soul mate.

After the first performance Golding Bright said to me: "This is a splendid show, but I'm afraid it is too clever for the ordinary public."

At the dress rehearsal people associated with the production, the costumiers, the scene painters, and other folk with experience of the stage, were stunned with the beauty of the dresses in the Court of Hunzollern scene. It never occurred to anybody that they were going to create protest. But they did. One critic said, "The ladies of the Court are alike afflicted with *embonpoint*. This may

have been meant as satire on German grossness, but the giggles of the audience proved that a different interpretation could be put, and was, on this unsightly and indelicate joke."

Why these Hunzollern dresses upset the critics I could never understand. I never met a member of the audience who was shocked by them. The Lord Chamberlain, stirred up by the press, requested me to alter the dresses. I was not at all willing to do so, but ultimately I modified them. As Lucifer, Delysia wore a skin-tight black costume. In the light of what has been worn in London since, it is amusing to think of the storm which this costume caused. Delysia looked most attractive in it. I often wonder why it is that dramatic critics have such a dislike for the female form, which the average man finds most attractive.

Delysia was much amused by the hubbub about her dresses, and frankly she could not understand the attitude of these critics. To one interviewer she said, " I wonder what your English critics really mean when they speak of this frock as ' daring.' If they mean ' improper,' ' indecent,' then I am angry. They say my back is bare—that it is too bare. It seems then that decency is to be estimated in square inches. Really I have no patience ; but I have proof, by my reception every night, that it is not my audience that objects to my frocks. I know your Mrs. Grundy ; but then she's not a playgoer."

At this epoch the London stage was rampant with vulgarity which passed unheeded by the censor, and I was truly indignant that my beautiful costumes should be criticised when coarseness of a kind which I would never permit upon my stage was tolerated and applauded at very many London theatres. But the mind of the stage censor in England has always been like that. You may be vulgar, you may be coarse, but when a manager thinks to introduce beauty and wit he is on dangerous ground.

One night, when Delysia was on the stage as Queen Elizabeth, a man in the stalls stood up and hissed. He was asked to leave, and did so. In the vestibule he told Charlie Thorburn, my manager at the Pavilion, that he had hissed

in order to protest against one of the noblest characters in English history—Queen Elizabeth—being made a subject of burlesque on the stage. He afterwards wrote me a long letter to the same effect from the Athenæum Club. He also wrote to the *Times*, and I feel that he was very sincere in his views.

That it pays to write a successful revue may be gathered from the fact that I paid in royalties for *As You Were* no less a sum than £21,000. *As You Were* gave me a very good opportunity of testing the box-office value of Delysia. In June, after she had been playing eleven months, she felt the need of a holiday, so I let her go for six weeks, and engaged in her place Miss Teddie Gerrard, who was then in the height of her popularity in London. Miss Gerrard looked most attractive, and at that time had an enormous first-night following ; and, judging by the applause she got every time she came upon the stage, one would have thought she would have filled the house easily for the six weeks Delysia was away. But we dropped £320 on the first week, and our receipts for the sixth week were £1100 less than they were the week Delysia went away. Delysia, returning in the very worst month of the year—July—brought business back to capacity almost up to the end of the run. Our receipts for the last week, even, were £2186.

Although I did not produce *As You Were* and take over the direction of the Pavilion until August, my landlords, the London Pavilion Ltd., were able at their thirty-second annual meeting to declare a profit of £12,664 for the year ending 31st December 1918, as against a profit of £3112 the preceding year ; this in spite of the fact that in the first part of the year the Pavilion had not been very successful. I had spent a large sum on decorations and improvements, and had made the theatre one of the most attractive and comfortable in London. As Mr. Walter Payne, the managing director, informed the shareholders at the meeting that, under his arrangement with me, I " took all risk of production, standing charges, and running expenses, and secured the company's preference dividend."

" Mr. Cochran," he added, " profits only when business is very good."

Fortunately for me business was very good ; and the chairman, Mr. H. H. Wells, told the shareholders that the good report was due to the satisfactory way in which Mr. Walter Payne had conducted negotiations with me—a sentiment which I heartily endorse.

Every American manager who came to London that summer wanted *As You Were,* but always with the stipulation that Delysia must go to America too. William A. Brady, arriving with Mary Nash to produce for me *The Man Who Came Back* at the Oxford, declared *As You Were* impossible without Delysia. Al Woods at last consented to take the play without her ; but then begged to be released from the contract, because he said another Delysia could not be found. Finally the American rights were secured by Mr. Ray Goetz for his wife, Irene Bordoni. Morris Gest arrived in London full of plans for his production of *Aphrodite* in New York ; but without a woman to play the chief part. It was then that I was able to fulfil my promise to Delysia that I would get her an offer five times the 500 dollars she had refused from Mr. Dillingham during the run of *Odds and Ends.* Gest offered me 2500 dollars a week for the artist, and 15 per cent. of the profits of the play for myself, if I would let Delysia go to New York to create the title rôle for him. I had to tell him that my plans for producing *Afgar,* which could not be played without Delysia, were too far advanced ; but I promised that he should have Delysia the following season in that play if he wanted her.

Charlie Dillingham had overlooked the drawing qualities of *The Better 'Ole* when I offered him the dramatic rights. *As You Were,* too, he returned with a letter telling me he thought it too English. Curiously enough, he saw its presentation in Philadelphia before I did. I had just arrived in New York when I ran into him on Broadway, and he stopped me. He said, " Charlie, your show, *As You Were,* will run for two years. I can't think how I let it

slip. I think I read two plays the same night, and the first one was so bad that it prejudiced me against the other."

During the run of *As You Were*, Major Gluckstein asked me if I would allow Delysia to run across from the stage door of the London Pavilion to the Trocadero opposite, and sing two songs at supper-time. I do not care for artists to sing in cabarets, restaurants, and places where people eat and drink; but Delysia's open-handedness was always getting her into financial difficulties, and I told Major Gluckstein, "If you will give her £25 a song—that is, £50 a night—she can come."

He grabbed me by the hand and said, "Right! She opens for two weeks, Monday week."

Delysia not only completed the two weeks, she was re-engaged, and Major Gluckstein often asked me for her services after that, but she didn't like the work, and didn't sing again. A lot of artists have been tried at the Trocadero, but Major Gluckstein told me, only a few weeks ago, that with the exception of Trini, whom also I secured for him, Delysia had been the only one who had achieved passing success.

When Morris Harvey was demobilised I put him in *As You Were*, in place of John Humphries, who needed a holiday. The occasion was marked by the introduction of a Cleopatra scene. My friend, Archibald Haddon of the *Daily Express*, described this scene as "Another nail in the office of the official censorship"; but other papers declared that "Cleopatra" showed Wimperis at his best. Her entrance song, which ran as follows, was a huge success:

"Cleopatra was a Beauty, Cleopatra was a Queen,
But the Government she really could not wheedle.
They reduced her, so to speak, to a fourteen-husband week,
And that's why Cleopatra got the needle."

Each verse had a fresh catch-line as to why Cleopatra "got the needle." One of them I remember was:

"For men she had a passion, but she went beyond her ration."

As You Were had no low comedy scenes, but depended on its dialogue, its tunes, and its beauty. Some of these Wimperis lines may seem a little laboured now, but they were irresistible at the time: "England is a suburb of Lloyd George." "It's as well to cut down your prophets as much as possible." "There's one King on the throne, and four off—counting Smillie." "The London Pavilion? Yes, that's where Cochran got his C.B." "We're all slaves here—I suppose you must be miners' delegates."

The play was full of army jokes, and nothing went better than when Morris Harvey described a show-girl's airy costume as "another new design for the R.A.F."

In March 1918 I took over the remainder of Mr. Seymour Hicks' tenancy of the Prince's Theatre, and also bought from Gilbert Miller his lease of the Garrick. Except for a temporary lodging given to *Carminetta*, my first production at the Prince's was *Jolly Jack Tar* on 29th November 1918. The play was an odd mixture by Seymour Hicks and Arthur Shirley.

Jolly Jack Tar didn't quite come off. The mixture of melodrama, musical comedy, revue, and moving picture didn't blend. We even worked the old Pepper's Ghost illusion. A naval captain knelt down in his cabin and prayed for guidance on the eve of a great battle—and the vision of Nelson was supposed to appear. But the mirror by which the effect was obtained was not always placed at the proper angle. One night there were roars of laughter because a couple of stage hands, eating bread and cheese and drinking beer, showed alongside Nelson. We made *Jolly Jack Tar* quite an elaborate production, and the storming of the Mole at Zeebrugge had quite a Drury Lane effect. But I lost several thousand pounds over the venture.

On 28th December 1918 I produced at the Oxford *In the Night Watch*, an adaptation by Michael Morton of the French naval drama *La Veille d'Armes*, by Claud Farrère and Lucien Nepoty. In the cast were Madge Titheradge, C. M. Hallard, C. V. France, Henry Wenman, and Jessie Bateman. The greater part of the action took

place on a French battleship. It was a strong, well-constructed drama, and, in the main, was very well played. I got an eight months' run out of it—five to very big business. It would, I believe, have run twelve months and more had there not been a difference of opinion between Miss Titheradge and the author and myself as to how the big scene should be played.

The captain in command of the battleship (C. V. France), had his young wife (Miss Titheradge), and a party of friends on board. During the evening the captain received secret orders to sail in the middle of the night—war has been declared. The party breaks up. The young wife begs her husband to permit her to stay with him for awhile, and not to leave by the pinnace which is taking the other guests ashore. Her husband tells her that that cannot be, but gives no reason. Angrily saying good-night to her husband, she goes to the cabin of a young officer with whom she had had a boy-and-girl friendship; earlier in the evening she had declined indignantly the young officer's invitation. The young officer is not in the cabin. She waits for him.

Now, the point of difference between Mr. Morton and myself on the one side, and Miss Titheradge on the other, was this: We pictured the young woman hesitating, worried as to whether or not she had committed a grave error. Her husband had refused to let her stay with him; his attitude had seemed harsh; she loved him, but was piqued because of his lack of tenderness, and she hoped to teach him a lesson. All this would have keyed up the audience, would have prepared them for the moment when the young man enters the cabin and, thinking she is ready to yield to him, makes love to her. Then while she, thrusting him from her, threatens to call for help, they see through the port-hole that the ship has gone to sea. They realise that war has been declared. The young officer becomes a sailor again. The captain is his chief; nothing must be done to prevent him from giving all his thought, all his energy, to fighting the enemy. The

captain must not know that the wife is on the ship. Passion, everything, must be sacrificed for France.

But Miss Titheradge would not see her part as Mr. Michael Morton and I saw it. She flatly refused to show any feminine knowledge that she was doing wrong in going to the young officer's cabin. She wanted to be seen as an innocent young girl, looking about the cabin, picking up photographs, peeping into odd corners with an *ingénue* air, showing only a larkish interest in the privacy of the young officer's quarters. We told her that such an attitude made the big scene, when it came, unexpected, unreal, brutally unreal. But Miss Titheradge would not see it in that way. "The people who come to see me," she said, "are nice people. I cannot possibly play a woman who could have thought for a moment that she was doing anything wrong in going to a man's room."

And Morton and I argued with her in vain. I had to conceal the anger I felt, that a capable and experienced actress of theatrical stock should show herself so little of the artist. I could not overcome her obstinacy. The scene had to be played as she wanted it to be played, and I believe that Miss Titheradge robbed Mr. Morton and myself of several thousands of pounds.

Apropos of this incident I wrote a letter to the press, relating what had happened, and discussing the snobbish "niceness" of the British stage. Of course Mr. Haddon came forward and applauded the noble sentiments of Miss Titheradge. Were he and she right, how could some of the great classic plays be interpolated? Curiously enough, Miss Sybil Thorndike, who even then was thinking of playing *The Cenci*, was Miss Titheradge's understudy in *The Night Watch*.

I have no sympathy with plays in which lewdness is introduced for the mere sake of attracting an undesirable class of audience. But *The Night Watch* was a good play, and in its original form, as well as in its adaptation, was by distinguished writers. The scene I have described was not dragged in as a sensational situation; it came in the ordinary development of the action of the play.

CHAPTER XXIV

Busy 1919—Robert Loraine in *Cyrano de Bergerac*—When I was not a "Commercial" Manager—*Cyrano* costs me £8000—Drury Lane Receipts—Miss Lilian Braithwaite's Speech that caused Loraine to call out "Shame!"—The Excellence of Seymour Hicks as an Actor—What Lady Tree said to him—A Garrick Club Election—*Afgar* and the Lord Chamberlain—Lord Sandhurst learns some Slang—Some George Gravesisms.

THE year 1919 was a busy one. I made productions at the Garrick, the St. Martin's, the Pavilion, and the Oxford. I had also taken over the Aldwych Theatre, and, for the purposes of boxing, the Holborn Stadium.

After a trial trip in Edinburgh and Glasgow I produced, with Robert Loraine, *Cyrano de Bergerac* at the Garrick Theatre. The translation we used was that of Gladys Thomas and Mary F. Guillemard.

My association with Richard Mansfield's production of *Cyrano* had given me a sentimental interest in the play; and Robert Loraine has so much of the noble Gascon in his own character, and is such a splendid romantic actor, that I had long considered him the ideal English Cyrano.

For the pictorial side we enlisted the co-operation of Edmund Dulac, and for the music, Jean Nougues, whose opera, *Quo Vadis*, is probably his best known work. Miss Stella Mervyn Campbell was the Roxane. Others in the cast were Nicholas Hannen as Christian, Gerald Lawrence as De Guiche, Ben Field as Ragueneau, Haidee Wright as Mother Marguerite, and Lewis Casson as Le Bret. Less important parts were played by Harry Kendall, who, I believe, started with me in *Watch Your Step*, and has since become an important West End actor; Vincent Sternroyd, for several years with Richard Mansfield, and not long

ago in *So This is London* at the Prince of Wales'; Tommy Weguelin, now in revue; Bruce Winston, the rotund comedian who, for several of my productions, officiated in my wardrobe as first cutter; and Miss Joan Clarkson, a beautiful young girl seen in several of my productions. She stepped into Miss Stella Campbell's rôle of Roxane at very short notice, and, although scarcely sixteen years old, gave a most careful and word-perfect performance.

But most notable of the small-part players was poor Meggie Albanesi in the part of Lise.

The reception of the play at the Garrick was enthusiastic. Mr. A. B. Walkley, in the *Times*, wrote that it had been produced romantically:

> " with beautiful romantic scenery and dresses designed by that romantic artist, Mr. Dulac, with an almost continuous accompaniment of romantic music, and, happiest stroke of all, with fearlessly romantic acting. Mr. Loraine has taught his vast crowd of players to rid themselves of English reticence and restraint, and just to let themselves go romantically. He is himself sonorously and picturesquely romantic. Of course he is not Coquelin, and he doesn't try to be. But he is an entirely romantic figure, and that is enough. His death is a thing of pure romantic beauty. For once we have a Roxane for whom a romantic passion does not seem absurd. The French Roxanes that one remembers one would much rather forget. Miss Stella Campbell is as romantic a figure in her way as Cyrano in his, and also a delight to the eye—which, as the French say, spoils nothing. The whole crowd, as we have said, has been inspired with the spirit of romance.
>
> " And when the play was over last night, the house gave Mr. Loraine a demonstration of delight—delight with the performance, delight at seeing the actor once more at his work—which fairly unnerved him, as well it might. He could only stammer out his thanks.

Some of the stage-crowd gathered behind him had resumed their airmen's uniform. And that gave the last touch of romance to this most romantic evening."

We played to capacity business, but unfortunately my enthusiasm for Cyrano had made me overstep the constable in regard to expenditure. Often have I been called a "commercial" manager, but in this case I proved myself unworthy of that description. The house could not hold enough to show a profit on our weekly expenses. My estimates had been far exceeded. We could not get certain parts played at the salaries on which we had counted. Alterations in costuming and scenery had been made to complete our satisfaction with the general effect.

We found ourselves in a situation for which I take the entire blame. It was not Loraine's job to worry about the cost of things; it was only up to him to obtain what he felt was the right effect. When he required players or accessories, which necessitated an increase of my budget, I should have denied him, but it was not in my nature so to do. My main desire was to present a worthy production of this truly beautiful play. It was obvious that the exchequer could not long stand the strain, and I set about looking for a big theatre. Fortunately, after playing at the Garrick only four weeks, I was able to secure Drury Lane at a rental of £650 per week. What a fitting arrangement it seemed! The idea of a National Theatre is, least of all, for it to be insular. Its spacious hospitality should be open to the very best plays of every country.

If the spirits of Shakespeare and Sheridan, Garrick and Macready, could have revisited Old Drury, I feel that they would have found something kindred in the work of the greatest dramatic poet of this generation and in the finest romantic actor of the first quarter of the twentieth century —for such I consider Loraine to be.

Drury Lane was found to be a better setting for Dulac's scenery and costumes. The heavy sets and the large number of players on the stage at one time had appeared

COSTUME DESIGNED BY EDMUND DULAC FOR ROBERT LORAINE IN "CYRANO DE BERGERAC"

Presented to Mrs. C. B. Cochran by the Artist.

cramped at the Garrick. Mr. Sidney Carroll said in the *Sunday Times* that I had fully justified my reputation as a commercial manager in transferring *Cyrano* holus-bolus to Drury Lane, and by giving the most artistic creation of the present-day stage in the best and biggest theatre available. He went on to say, " A big play, a big idea, and a big theatre. For bigness is, to be sure, the keynote of both *Cyrano* and Cochran."

When I found that the longer I ran *Cyrano* at the Garrick the greater would be the loss, I called the company together and informed them of the true position. I told them it was a necessity that while the play remained at the Garrick the salary list must be reduced by 20 per cent. At the same time I promised that I would do my utmost to secure the biggest theatre available at the earliest possible date. I did not ask for their collective acceptance of my proposal, but I gave each player the opportunity of meeting me, as Robert Loraine had done by making a suggested reduction. Were it not possible for them to accept the reduction, they were at liberty to give me two weeks' notice and look for another engagement. This, I venture to suggest, was no great hardship, as the majority of the players had anticipated a short run, it being generally considered in the profession that the *Cyrano* revival had no prospect of financial success. Further, I promised that when the cost of the production had been paid off, I would return the players the 20 per cent. reduction before taking any profit. In half an hour from the close of the meeting, Lewis Casson, representing the members of the company, came to tell me that all but one wished to continue with me on the terms I had outlined. At the request of Mr. Casson I promised to make no statement to the press unless the new arrangement became public. But of course it did leak out, and therefore I gave a statement to the daily papers.

It was Loraine's original intention to give ten performances a week, which would just about have got us through, but he found that the strain of the long part was too great

for him to play more than eight times weekly. Again, it was at a time when the cost of material had risen enormously, and prices fluctuated so much that contractors would not bind themselves to estimates. Work had to be completed at overtime rates, and it was not until we were fairly launched at the Garrick that I knew exactly where I stood. I know this was not "commercial," but these reminiscences shall be nothing if not truthful.

Unfortunately, the end of our first week at Drury Lane synchronised with a heat wave, and our receipts were not what I had hoped they would be. The following are the actual figures at the Garrick Theatre and at Drury Lane:

	Garrick.	Drury Lane.
1st week	£1930 16 6	£2742 6 0
2nd ,, ...	1982 2 0	2459 8 2
3rd ,, (Holy week, 5 days) . .	1618 7 6	2090 3 9
4th ,, ...	1978 3 6	2078 19 3

Unquestionably, but for the sudden change of weather, we should have been able to establish a handsome profit at the Lane.

On the Saturday afternoon of our fourth week at Drury Lane I walked into Robert Loraine's dressing-room just as the curtain had fallen.

"I was about to write you a letter," he said, "and I am sorry you have come to see me."

I replied that although I should look forward with pleasure to his letter, I saw no reason why, because he had written, he should be sorry to see me. In a few words and quite frankly he told me that he wished to terminate our three years' contract. He had not desired to discuss it, but preferred to put his suggestion in writing.

"You are too damned persuasive," he said.

Curiously enough, the whole of that afternoon the Loraine contract had been weighing on my mind. It was, I considered, of a most onerous character, and might easily involve me in financial ruin. I had seriously considered, and discussed with my wife, the advisability of offering Loraine a sum of money to terminate the arrangement.

But Loraine's own proposal, coming so suddenly, staggered me. I asked him if he had given the matter serious consideration. I reminded him that the contract was unusually advantageous to him, and told him that I did not want him, acting on an impulse which might be due to fatigue from the arduous work which he had been doing, to make me an offer which I believed was most favourable to myself.

Loraine had caught a severe cold in the provinces before coming to London. The rehearsals had been most strenuous, and the rôle of Cyrano must be as fatiguing as any the stage knows. Cyrano has to talk incessantly.

I told Loraine that I would not take his proposition as serious unless he confirmed it in writing by Monday morning. The next night happened to be the annual dinner of the Royal Theatrical Fund. I found that my wife and I had been placed next to Loraine. However, we talked no business, shared our wine, and had a good time.

At the reception before the dinner I had met Miss Lilian Braithwaite, who expressed surprise at seeing me, and seemed somewhat embarrassed. She was a leading light of the Actors' Association, with whom Loraine and myself had had argument because of the late night rehearsals of *Cyrano*. The secretary of the Association had written a letter to the press, which I resented, as always I had paid my minor actors and chorus people more than the minimum wage which afterwards was demanded, and also had endeavoured always to consider the comfort of all my players. That this was the general opinion of the players, was shown by the shower of sympathetic correspondence I received when the secretary's letter was published. I said to Loraine, "I am sure Miss Braithwaite has prepared a speech denouncing me, and she is nervous."

Sure enough, when Miss Braithwaite made her speech, her remarks had little to do with the Royal Theatrical Fund, but a great deal about the "Commercial Manager." Although my name was not mentioned, her remarks plainly pointed to me. When it became obvious that she was attacking me, I could not prevent Loraine from crying out

"Shame!" and, later, Fred Terry, who was in the chair, arose and not only made an emphatic protest, but paid me, I think, the greatest compliment I have ever received in public. I am not over-modest, but I did wish that I deserved the many flattering things said about me by Mr. Terry.

The incident was unfortunate, but it made no difference to the friendship existing between Miss Braithwaite and myself. Very soon afterwards she was playing in one of my productions.

After the dinner, Loraine insisted on my wife and myself going home to his flat in St. James's Street, and we stayed there until 4 a.m., talking about everything except our own business. Loraine was all for chartering a ship and becoming a sort of pirate. We had lots of fun, and left each other in good spirits.

The next day Loraine confirmed his desire to cancel the contract, and I agreed. He took over the production and the rights of the play, but in the matter of finance we disagreed. A considerable sum of money was involved, and both of us thought we were in the right as regards this. When the question got into the hands of the lawyers I asked my personal representative, Major Walter Creighton, who was very friendly with Loraine, to go to him and suggest that he should appoint an arbitrator. I promised to accept anybody he named. I had too great a regard for Loraine to wish to drag our private differences through the law courts. Robert Loraine chose a fellow-member of the Garrick Club, Mr. H. J. Higgins, solicitor, and the moving spirit of Covent Garden Opera. Our cases were laid before Mr. Higgins by our respective solicitors. He awarded a substantial sum to me, and, although I am sure he was not flush at the time, in a very few days Bob Loraine sent me a cheque in settlement.

It was only about two weeks after we had severed our business association that Loraine called on me at my house in Aldford Street, and said that he would like again to enter into managerial association with me. As frankly

as he had told me that he wished to call our association off, he declared that he had underestimated my value in the partnership, and said he would like to start where we left off. I was touched by the proposal, but told him I did not think it prudent for us to begin another business relationship.

My car was at the door. My wife and I were going to look for a country house for the summer. Bob Loraine joined us, and helped to choose the house which we took. There is no one whose friendship I value more highly than Loraine's, for whose gallantry and general character I have a great admiration. He is a big man.

Cyrano in London established a firm friendship, but caused me a loss of £8000.

Seymour Hicks and I have been friends for a long time. I made up my mind many years ago that he was about the best actor on the British stage. Moreover, there is not much he doesn't know about the theatre. I think sometimes he doesn't know it, but he oozes grease paint from every pore. Seymour cannot help acting; he is always acting. Life to him is a comedy. Probably his versatility accounts for his not being a West End actor-manager. He is never content unless he is acting, writing a play and a book, and producing a musical comedy or two at the same time. He cannot rest for a week, but must rush to the music-halls. Too much "twice nightly" at popular prices unquestionably affected his West End value. People don't want to pay half a guinea for what they've had for half a crown.

But for this I cannot believe that Seymour Hicks' brilliant performance in *Sleeping Partners* could have failed to draw the town for a year. The play and his acting had unanimous praise from the press, and all who saw it were of the same mind as the critics. It was produced, it is true, during the air raids; but its life was again brief when I revived it at the St. Martin's Theatre on 17th February 1919.

Save for our brief association with the recruiting play,

England Expects, at the London Opera-House in 1914, it was not until the early part of 1919 that Hicks and I had any business relationship. We were to be partners, with Hicks drawing a substantial salary, for a term of years at the St. Martin's Theatre, of which I had a long lease. Our first production was a satirical comedy by Basil Macdonald Hastings, entitled *A Certain Liveliness*. We thought it an amusing play, but it fell flat, despite a cast that included Lady Tree, Muriel Martin Harvey, Sydney Valentine, and the picturesque Vera Neville, who had been with me in *Houp-La*. The box office certainly did not give it full marks, and, after all, the box office is the decisive critic.

The play began with some dialogue between two servants, Exelaunai and Enteuthen. Says Enteuthen :

> " No one can ever take us seriously again. As we walked in dignity from the reception-room I heard him mumble to himself the old cliché from Xenophon, ' Enteuthen exelaunai stathmous treis,' and so, for the future, have our names been recorded on the register of the palace establishment."

Macdonald Hastings, at rehearsal, was particular that these lines should be put over distinctly. " A. B. Walkley is sure to notice the quotation," he explained. And he was right. The next day Mr. Walkley wrote in the *Times* :

> " Mr. Macdonald Hastings has a joke about ' boys self-taught at a public school.' It must have been to please these that he chose the first four names in the cast. For, put together, they will be found to make up one of the most familiar sentences in the *Anabasis* —' Enteuthen exelaunai stathmous treis.' The rest of the play-going world, innocent of Xenophon, will perhaps take it for granted that Mr. Hastings' nomenclature, like Coleridge's metaphysics, is only his fun."

The novelty of the production was a magnificent oak room, lent to me and built up on the stage by White, Allom & Co., under the direction of that clever designer, Mr.

Adams Acton. The panelling was superb, and had been bought from a Scottish castle. It was afterwards sold to an American millionaire for many thousands of dollars.

Seymour Hicks tells the story that one day at rehearsal he told Lady Tree what he proposed to do in a scene which he was to play with her ; he made one or two suggestions as to what positions he would like her to take. According to Hicks, Lady Tree's reply was, " Don't worry, Mr. Hicks ; it will be quite all right. You do your little bit of acting wherever you like. It won't worry me, and I shall be ready when you want me."

I won't vouch for this story, any more than I will for the Hicksian anecdote of the actor-manager who sought election at the Garrick Club. Although a relative had been a much-liked member of the club, the candidature of the actor-manager met with opposition. There was an equally strong body of opinion from the older members that he should be elected. The opposition pointed out that the actor-manager had a partner whom they did not consider desirable. Were he elected he might wish to bring his partner to the club as a guest. A member who had known the candidate since he was a boy, said, " Leave that to me. I will write him an unofficial letter."

The reply came :

> " Don't be alarmed ; I would no more think of taking my partner to my club than I would to my own home."

Seymour Hicks was playing at a certain theatre during an air raid. His manager, an American long resident in England, was spending the evening in the cellar of the Savoy Hotel. He rang up his representative at the theatre to ask how things were. " It's terrible here," said the representative. " The walls of the theatre are so thin the house seems to shake with every explosion. I'm sure they're bombing near to us. Don't you think we had better close up ? "

"No," was the reply. "Carry on—and, by the way, ask Mr. Hicks if he will kindly bring my wife home after the play!"

After the unsuccessful revival of *Sleeping Partners*, we hadn't another play in which we had confidence, and I got an offer from Moss Empires Ltd. to take the theatre for a year. Hicks could get plenty of work on the Halls, and was a sure draw in the provinces, so I offered him one-half of my profit rental to compensate him for not staying in the West End, and he was to give me one-half of his profits for the same period. Under this arrangement I paid him £6500, and received from him £199!

On 17th September 1919 I produced *Afgar* at the London Pavilion. The original operette, by Michel Carre and André Barde, with music by Charles Cuvillier, was very "shocking," but a success in France. Within my memory it has been revived half a dozen times at different theatres in Paris. I offered the job of adaptation first of all to Arthur Wimperis. He said he couldn't make anything of it. Then I suggested the collaboration of Wimperis and Fred Thompson, but this "The Wimp" declined. Ultimately it was done by Fred Thompson, whose name was attached to so many musical plays at the time that the newspapers referred to him facetiously as the "inevitable Mr. Thompson," and Worton David. The original French story was entirely altered. Fred Thompson and I got the incident of the strike of the wives from a Lysistrata-like episode in a play we saw together at the Renaissance. I have forgotten the title, but Cora Lapercerie was in the play.

A great many army men had seen the original operette in Paris, and wondered how I had altered it so that it could be permitted on the London stage. By way of a joke I issued a statement that the piece as played at the London Pavilion had "a love story as innocent and pretty as *Peg o' My Heart*." This fairly got my good friend Haddon going again. He came out in the *Express* with the headlines: "Mr. Cochran pulls our Leg." "How to be innocent in a Harem." "Mr. Hartley Manners should

sue Mr. Cochran for defamation of character," he wrote. " Innocent, indeed ! That's exactly what *Afgar* is not. Pretty ? H'm—yes ! . . . With a leer beneath its prettiness. Could sane people anticipate an atmosphere of innocence in a play produced by Mr. Cochran at the London Pavilion about a Moorish harem ? "

That's exactly what I thought ; could they ? But apparently Mr. Haddon had done so. Haddon continued to castigate me in a Manchester Sunday paper for which he wrote. He called me " irredeemable." " *Peg o' My Heart* really is innocent and pretty. It's the sweet lavender of the present decade," he said.

" Could a play be as innocent as *Peg o' My Heart*, with such lines as the following :

" Lord Afgar, about to add another wife to the harem, says that he must have a complete collection. The favourite, played by Delysia, replies, ' Have I not a complete collection ? Is there anything missing ? ' Says Afgar, ' I haven't been through the inventory lately.' "

Mr. Haddon concluded with, " Lord Sandhurst's resignation is overdue."

Apropos of the Lord Chamberlain, Lord Sandhurst said he would like to have my version of *Afgar* in plenty of time, and he would read it himself. It was sent to him in Scotland during August, and passed.

The morning after the production, the *Times* said, " There is very little in this unusually bright entertainment to which even the most censorious will be likely to take objection." And Mr. E. A. Baughan, in the *Daily News*, seemed to deplore that there was only one bare back.

" True, it is a very bare back, indeed," he wrote, " but Mona Paiva is a dancer, and Mr. Cochran could easily argue that her nakedness is in character."

The old favourites from *As You Were*, Delysia and John Humphries (excellent as Lord Afgar), were reinforced by Harry Welchman, Lupino Lane, and a delightful singer, Marie Burke (the wife of Tom Burke, the Lancashire tenor, who just then had made a somewhat mild sensation at

Covent Garden). Lane was a fine foil to Humphries, and Welchman sang and acted splendidly in the early part of the run. Later, his performance suffered from self-consciousness.

During the latter part of the run of *As You Were* I had had a business disagreement with the West End Libraries, and they were compelled to buy tickets for all my productions in the same way as the ordinary public. The receipts of *As You Were* were in no wise affected, and I started *Afgar* under the same conditions. The morning after *Afgar* was produced I went to the Pavilion at 10.30, and found a queue lined up all round the theatre. All day long, Mr. Groth and his box-office staff sold seats as quickly as they could. The amount of money they took was limited only by physical possibilities. We produced on a Wednesday. On the Thursday night we took £413, 17s.; on the Friday night, £441, 8s.; on Saturday afternoon, £349, 19s. 6d.; on Saturday night, £488, 10s. We were sold out of the reserved seats every night, and the receipts varied only in accordance with the numbers in the pit and the standing room that was sold. In our first completed week we took £3416, 3s. 6d., which was a record for the London Pavilion. These figures were only possible because I was paying no library discount, also I had slightly increased the prices all over the house. We averaged £3400 for several weeks, until the week ending 14th November, when we took £3580. This stood as a record for the run, which finished to a £2000 week. I paid in royalties on *Afgar*, £27,000. It had a long run in the provinces, and was played for two years in U.S.A. by Mr. Morris Gest in association with me; and Delysia got the 2500 dollars per week which I had promised her.

Although the play had been read by the Lord Chamberlain himself, and approved by one of his representatives at the first performance, Mr. Haddon and a few of his colleagues raised such a pother that it was not long before I was in trouble again with the powers that be at St. James's Palace. Most of the fuss was about the costume worn by the dancer, Mona Paiva. Recalling her costume,

and that worn by Mitty, the dancer in *Fun of the Fayre* two years later on the same stage, it is difficult to believe that there was so much fuss about the *Afgar* dress. The costume from being exquisitely beautiful became an atrocity, owing to the Lord Chamberlain's additions to the original design. The artist resented the stupid interference, and begged to be released from her contract. She returned to Paris, and became one of the principal dancers at the Opera Comique.

No more courteous official ever lived than the late Lord Sandhurst, but he was thoroughly Victorian. *Afgar* provided an opportunity for me to have quite a long talk with him about modern slang. To satisfy those who were protesting against *Afgar*, some six months after it had been passed and produced, he asked me to go through the book with him. The first line he pointed out as being objectionable was, " The girls don't seem to *fall* for me as they used to do."

" Now," he said, " there can be but one meaning to that line. We all know the term ' a fallen woman.' "

" Evidently your Lordship is not familiar with American slang," I said. " On my way here I was stopped by a man who told me he had been to the Carpentier-Beckett fight which had taken place just previously. He had backed Beckett. ' Why did you do it ? ' I asked. ' Oh ! ' he replied, ' somebody told me it was a good thing for him, and, like a looby, I *fell* for it.' "

" That's astonishingly interesting," said Lord Sandhurst. " Now, please, tell me, what is a ' looby ' ? "

After this he was convinced that he was dealing with what to him was practically a foreign language.

My last two productions in 1919 were of no particular interest. They were *Maggie* at the Oxford on 22nd October, and *The Eclipse* at the Garrick on 12th November. *Maggie* was a musical comedy of the conventional type. Its chief merit was its music by Marcel Lattes. In the cast were Winifred Barnes, George Graves, Maidie Hope, Ivy Shilling, the dancer, and Peter Gawthorne. Lattes wrote his music to a French book by Étienne Rey and Jacques Bousquet.

It was a war story written and composed for war audiences when the French authors and composers were at the front. Fred Thompson heard Lattes play the music in Paris, and wanted to do the book for me in England. But the war being over, it was necessary to have an entirely different story. Thompson supplied a new story for England, and I arranged that the authors should use such of his story as they desired when the play was produced in Paris, and that he should have royalties. For this to be done, I introduced Thompson to Monsieur Bloch, and he was made a member of the French Authors' Society. When, under the title of *Nelly*, the piece was given at the Gaiété Lyrique, Paris, it was announced as " from a story by Fred Thompson."

Although the receipts of *Maggie* reached as high as £3000 in a week, the piece had only a three months' run. The *Times* in reviewing the production expressed the hope that more might be heard of the music of Mr. Lattes. The critic said, " There is a freshness about its treatment which is very welcome, and now and again the orchestration is particularly effective. In fact, the main trouble last night seemed to be that a good deal of the music was beyond the powers of those who had to sing to it."

I think probably this accounted for the play's failure. Miss Winifred Barnes had Miss Nancie Lovat as understudy, and one night, when I was in Paris, Miss Lovat got her chance. I have a written report before me from one of my staff, which reads, " We saw *Maggie* played and sung as it ought to be for the first time last night."

Mr. Haddon loved *Maggie*; but it cost me quite a lot of money.

Graves got roars of laughter. These were some of his Gravesisms :

" Have you ever seen a peacock sitting on the edge of your bed blowing a cornet ? "

" Why did you kiss that lamp-post and call it ' Lizzie ' ? "

" Oh, that jazz ! I saw people so close together, damme ! the steam rose ! "

The Eclipse was a farce by Fred Thompson and E. Phillips Oppenheim, with lyrics by Adrian Ross, and music by Herman Darewski and Melville Gideon. My cast included Teddie Gerard, Alfred Lester, Farren Soutar, the late Arthur Hatherton, Morris Harvey, Nancy Gibbs (who achieved success later in the musical play *Monsieur Beaucaire* in America), A. H. Majilton (now the master of the dance at Daly's) Pope Stamper, Jimmie Campbell, and Dorothy Monkman.

As the authors insisted that they had written a farce, and not a musical comedy, I called in Charles Hawtrey to produce for me. Hawtrey didn't quite agree with the authors' estimate of their work, but he was most charming and painstaking. Teddie Gerard was better than I have seen her before or since. Lester was his usual lugubrious self, with at least one very good song—"Crimes." There was never a safer comedian than the late Alfred Lester, but he needed a nippy, alert, funny man up against him. Not only was the contrast useful, but Lester worked better with opposition.

The Eclipse didn't set the Thames on fire. It ran at the Garrick until the last day of the year, and then I moved it to the Oxford. I had not at that time reconstructed the Oxford Music-Hall, and it was not exactly suitable for such musical plays as *Maggie* and *The Eclipse*. There was a big apron stage and a wilderness of space on each side of the auditorium. The apron, most useful for the old-time comics and serio-comics, who would come down to its very edge and hurl their songs at the audience, rather terrified the more or less inexperienced musical comedy ladies and young men. Open spaces at the side of any auditorium invariably provoke restlessness in the audience.

CHAPTER XXV

How my Productions brought Big Profits to the Oxford—An Altered Arrangement—A Strange Letter about Delysia—The First Guitry Season—Sacha Guitry's Opinion—Little Tich—Sacha's First Meeting with Yvonne Printemps—Lucien Guitry, the Greatest Actor in Europe—The True Story of the Disturbances when Miss Laurette Taylor played at the Garrick Theatre—" Stink " Bombs and Insults —What Mr. Justice Horridge said—Actor-Managers' Protest to the *Times*—The Man who was paid £50 to create a Disturbance—Name that was never disclosed.

I BEGAN my theatrical operations at the Princes Theatre, 1920, by installing there a musical concoction, constructed for the music-halls, entitled *Pretty Peggy*. It was a vehicle for Charles Austin, the very funny Parker of the music-halls, and the two " Pounds," Lorna and Toots. I saw the show at the Kennington Theatre, and felt it was just right for the Princes at popular prices. So it proved to be. We did a splendid business, and Charles Austin drew a lot of West End people who had never seen him before.

I have always liked contrasts, and I never indulged in a greater than when I followed *Pretty Peggy* with the divine Pavlova, who closed at Drury Lane on Saturday, the 13th, and opened with me on the following Monday. At the Oxford I revived *The Better 'Ole* for five weeks, and on 8th April produced *The Man Who Came Back*, introducing a first-rate American actress in Mary Nash. The drama, by Jules Eckert Goodman, was crude, but had a " punch " ; it made a fortune for Bill Brady in U.S.A. The big scene was in an opium den. Mary Nash received an ovation.

On the night of the production of *The Man Who Came Back* at the Oxford, Mr. Sam Goldwyn offered Mr. Brady 150,000 dollars for the Moving Picture rights. He refused, sticking out for 200,000 dollars. He later got that sum or more. The English players in the cast of *The Man Who Came Back* were George Relph, Louis Goodrich, Henry Wenman, and Lilian Braithwaite. The play had a good run at the Oxford, and then I moved it to Princes.

Up to this time the Oxford had known little of Royalty; but members of the Royal Family were frequent visitors during the run of *The Man Who Came Back.* On the second night the Duke of York came, and he told me that he had been attracted by Mr. Walkley's notice in the *Times* —so, after all, critics do count! It was not long before the King and Queen came, and both of them expressed to me their enjoyment of the play.

I had been providing the entertainment at the Oxford up to the end of the run of *The Man Who Came Back* under an arrangement of a minimum guarantee and a share of the receipts to my landlords, " The Oxford Limited." That I had not done so badly for them may be gathered from the fact that during the three years I had provided the entertainments they had paid 31 per cent. in dividends, paid off mortgages and loans of £33,000, spent £10,000 on renovations and repairs, and written off £5000—for the depreciation of their investments owing to the war. My profit had to come on top of that. Had I stood in the shoes of my landlords how well I should have done for myself! At the Twenty-eighth Annual Meeting of The Oxford Limited, in July 1920, Mr. Walter Payne, chairman of the company, announced that they were about to enter into an arrangement with me for a long term. In consideration of my spending a large sum of money in improvements I was to have the theatre for a long period at a fixed rental, which would enable the shareholders to get a regular 10 per cent.

It was just before the production of *The Man Who Came Back* at the Oxford that, returning from New

York, I received on board ship a wireless which ran as follows:

> "*Sun Newspaper* states you are bringing your show *Afgar* from London with Miss Delysia to our country. Saw show London last September. It must not come here. It is beautiful, but its exotic, sensual note, combined with prohibition, will produce disastrous results on our youth. I am a rich man, and just. I would not deprive Miss Delysia of her 5000 dollars' salary without compensation. I will sacrifice myself by marrying her, and offer her a home at Tulsa, a large tract of land adjoining proven oil territory, three complete drilling plants, 100,000 dollars cash. Affectionate disposition, artistic temperament. Photograph follows. If lady accepts offer I will follow photograph. Refer as to character and financial position F. W. Adshire, President, First State Bank, Oilton, Oklahoma.—LEENNELL CARRERAS, Tulsa, Oklahoma."

While in America I engaged Maurice, the ballroom dancer, and Leonora Hughes to come to London. Maurice and his wife, Florence Walton, had parted, and I made an offer for Maurice to dance with Ida Adams, who had been with me in *Houp-La*. They started rehearsing, but Miss Adams abandoned the idea. At the Biltmore Hotel, New York, Maurice danced privately before me with Miss Hughes, and I signed them up, and they made their first appearance together at the Piccadilly Hotel, London. To run a dancing establishment was a new venture for me, and, indeed, I had my hands very full at this time, what with drama at the Oxford, *Afgar* at the Pavilion, drama at the Garrick, a musical show at the Apollo (which I had leased), and Pavlova at the Princes. The Aldwych (of which I took a lease in November 1919) I had sublet. At the Holborn Stadium, too, I was running boxing regularly, with an occasional big match at Olympia.

When I took over the Aldwych Theatre I sublet it to

Mr. Lewis Waller, jun., who in turn sublet it to Miss Viola Tree. Miss Tree was without a play for May, a good theatrical month, and she came to me for advice and co-operation. I told her that I had been trying to bring over the Guitrys—Lucien, Sacha, and Sacha's clever and beautiful wife, Yvonne Printemps, but I had not a theatre available. They wanted a guarantee, and Miss Tree said she could not take the risk. I offered to join Miss Tree in presenting the Guitrys, to divide the profits, or to bear whatever loss there might be, and she jumped at the suggestion.

Lady Cunard very kindly placed her house in Carlton House Terrace at our disposal for a reception to the Guitry family when they arrived from Paris, and among those who came to it were the French Ambassador, the Princess of Monaco, Princess Antoine Bibesco, the Duke and Duchess of Rutland, the Duke of Westminster, the Countess of Dudley, Lord and Lady Curzon, the Lord Chief Justice and Lady Reading, Lord and Lady Ribblesdale, Lord D'Abernon, Lady Lavery, Miss Ellen Terry, Lady Massarene, and a host of other notables.

Sacha Guitry surprised the interviewers by stating that his favourite actor was Little Tich. He described him as the embodiment of all that the theatre means—the quintessence of art. When he was asked to compare the theatre of to-day with that of yesterday, he said, " I believe that if the famous actors of old were to return to the stage, people would say—What are they ? " He described the House of Molière as " not a theatre, but a museum."

Sacha is the most remarkable man of the theatre I have met. Though he is not much over forty, he has written fifty plays, has achieved distinction as an actor, and has no mean ability as a painter. I am the happy possessor of several admirable specimens of his work.

The first performance of the Guitrys in London at the Aldwych produced as fashionable a gathering as the reception at Lady Cunard's. The play chosen was *Nono*, which was written by Sacha when he was sixteen. It brought to London the boulevard spirit, and as the critic of the *Morning*

Post said, " of all things French, the spirit of the boulevard is best known in England." Sacha was vastly pleased at the way in which the play was followed by the audience. He declared to me that the laughs were as many and in exactly the same places as in Paris. Her performance of *Nono* made Yvonne Printemps a darling of the London public. I recall that she very nearly played for me in *Houp-La* at the St. Martin's Theatre. Monsieur Ercole, the international impresario, had persuaded her to accept an engagement with me, and terms were agreed upon, and I had sent a contract over for her signature, when she cried off ; and, instead, made her first appearance with Sacha Guitry in Paris in *Jean de la Fontaine.* Sacha told me of the first time he saw her (he was married previously to the brilliant comedienne, Charlotte Lyses). He was in a box at the Folies-Bergère. The revue had begun to bore him, when a young girl, dressed as a boy in a velvet suit, came on the stage. She was reading a book, and had to assume an attitude of deep reflection with one finger pointed to her forehead. One of the characters on the stage spoke to her. She spoke, and then again assumed her attitude of reflection. Sacha looked at his programme for her name and read :

" Le fils de Sacha Guitry . . . Yvonne Printemps."

The scene was a skit on the precocity of Sacha—an actor-manager in his teens—and Yvonne Printemps was playing his supposed son. It was, however, a long time after this that he and Yvonne Printemps met.

The next play produced at the Aldwych by the Guitrys was *La Prise de Berg Op Zoom,* a version of which had been done in English previously by Louis Meyer at the Garrick Theatre. The great night of the season came when Lucien Guitry, who had not appeared in the two preceding plays, gave us *Pasteur,* which, like all the plays presented during the season, was by his son Sacha. Mr. Walkley in the *Times* described it as " a remarkable work," and of Lucien Guitry's performance he said, " it is a superb achievement of artistic impersonation." When father and son stood

OIL PAINTING OF LUCIEN GUITRY, BY HIS SON, SACHA

Presented to Charles B. Cochran by the Artist.

together, bowing their acknowledgments, the house experienced a genuine thrill of emotion. " I shall be ashamed to act again," was the comment of Mr. Seymour Hicks, after seeing Lucien Guitry's *Pasteur*. Not the least appreciative members of the audience during the Guitry Season were the players at the London theatres. Frequent visitors were Sir Johnston Forbes-Robertson, Laurette Taylor, Edward Knoblock, Lady Tree, Melba, Clara Butt, D'Alvarez, and Gladys Cooper.

I met George M. Cohan in Paris. " How does that guy, Lucien Guitry, stand over here ? " he asked. I told him that, generally, he was considered the best actor in Europe. " And, you may add, America," he said. " I never saw acting until last night ! " He had seen him in *Jacqueline*, and he told me that he could not help thinking, as Guitry stood silent and motionless at the end of the big act, what the actors who were considered the " big thing " in America would have done in a similar situation. Guitry just did nothing. Cohan commissioned me to make a very handsome proposal to Lucien Guitry to go to America. " I want," he said, " to show those guys at the Lambs' Club, just how little they know about it ! "

Although in many ways there could be no two men more dissimilar than Lucien Guitry and George M. Cohan, the latter, in my opinion, comes nearer to the great Frenchman than any actor I know on the English-speaking stage. He has the same quality of authority in repose ; he can make an audience feel what he is thinking.

Pasteur was followed by *Jean de la Fontaine*. I have always considered this the best of Sacha's plays, and I was pleased, in discussing it with him, to find that he shared my view. Yvonne Printemps, for whom Sacha had also worked a song into *Nono*, delighted the house with songs of Georges Lulli in the rôle of Mlle. Certain. *L'Illusioniste* gave Yvonne Printemps her chance to show what the music-halls lost when the theatre absorbed her. She sang in English, and kicked over her head. She did it so well that one actually thought it was the real thing, until there came a

slight touch of emphasis, which made it—as she intended—a parody of the music-hall manner.

The season finished with *Mon Père avait Raison*, which was honoured by a visit from the King and Queen. This was the only play given during the season in which the three Guitrys appeared together. Writing of this play, Mr. Walkley said, "One is weary of praising Lucien Guitry's acting. There is nothing, we think, on the contemporary stage to touch it."

To enable actors and actresses to see the Guitrys together, Miss Tree and I gave a professional *matinée* of *Mon Père avait Raison*; it was an occasion of great enthusiasm.

Sacha Guitry has described himself as "the son of France's greatest actor," but he is much more than this; as an actor he is a charmer, as an author—a magician. He makes a play from emotions rather than out of situations. When he began as a dramatist he broke all the rules, and so antagonised the critics; but since then he has even been called the Molière of his generation. He declared that the criticism of his plays in London made him feel fifteen years younger, because the reservations of praise were almost exactly similar to those withheld from him when he made his début as an author in Paris. Sacha finds it difficult to understand the attitude of those who see perfection of dramatic art only in plays of a serious character—such as *Pasteur*. He says that there is as much philosophy and as true a moral in *Nono* or in *Le Veilleur de Nuit*.

I bought the English and American rights of two of his plays, *L'Illusioniste* and *Deburau*. I have never been able to get a satisfactory English version of the former, so I have never produced it. If only Sir Gerald du Maurier would have the courage to play it—what a success it could be. Mr. Granville Barker did an admirable version of *Deburau*, reproducing to perfection the free verse of Sacha, and I was fortunate in making arrangements with Mr. David Belasco to present the play in New York, where it had a big success. I bought the play for Seymour Hicks—the ideal Deburau—

VIOLA TREE — CHARLES B. COCHRAN — SACHA GUITRY — YVONNE PRINTEMPS

at his request. He started learning the part with great enthusiasm, and then for some reason or other got afraid of it. Both Sacha Guitry and his father admire Seymour as an actor, and they were anxious that he should play Deburau. "I am afraid," Seymour told Sacha. Sacha was astonished. "You have only," he said, "to play it as you played *Faisons un Rêve* (Sleeping Partners). It is the same man in each case, and he must be played in the same way."

In the end I parted with the play to Robert Loraine, who made the character a Cyrano. I saw the dress rehearsal with Granville Barker; we thought that producer and players had formed a wrong conception of the play. It did not prove successful.

There are countless amusing stories told about Sacha Guitry. I like as well as any other the following:

It was when Paris was being bombarded. Everybody who could afford it was flying from the city. Sacha met several acquaintances, all of whom had a different excuse for leaving Paris. "The doctor says my children must go south," said one. "My wife needs a change," said another —and so on. "Why are you going?" said one to Sacha, after explaining his own reasons. "Because I'm frightened to death!" was his reply.

In America I had seen Miss Laurette Taylor in *One Night in Rome*—a play by her husband, Hartley Manners, who was a friend of mine when he was an actor at the St. James's Theatre in the late 'nineties. It was not a great play, but Miss Taylor had made a memorable success in *Peg o' My Heart*, and I thought that the London public might like to see her again in the strongly contrasted character of an Italian fortune-teller. I entered into a sharing arrangement with Hartley Manners, and the play was presented at the Garrick Theatre on Thursday, 29th April 1920.

Those who were present are not likely to forget the occasion. Soon after the curtain rose, there were more or less good-humoured remarks from the gallery, who com-

plained that they could not see. The act drop did not ascend more than half the height of the proscenium, and was used as a frame for a small interior scene. This unquestionably affected the line of sight from the gallery. The scene represented a fortune-teller's dimly lit bizarre boudoir. One of the characters in the play called it "a horrible room," at which the "gods" cheered. The phrase, "She makes it as difficult as possible to see," was also greeted with mocking applause.

When Miss Taylor appeared, her charm, sympathetic smile, and dramatic power secured comparative quiet. There were calls at the end of the act, and Miss Taylor stepped before the act drop and made a humorous apology for the shortcomings of the scenery, which she promised should be rectified on the morrow, and she got such a good-natured laugh when she explained that the scenery had been planned for America, "where we only do things on a small scale," that I thought everybody in the house was satisfied, and that all would be well for the rest of the evening. The cheering seemed to be absolutely genuine.

But when the play started again there was a venom about the insults which were shouted from the gallery, and it became obvious that there were people up there who were determined to wreck the play. Coppers were thrown on the stage and "stink bombs" and electric snuff. "Quex," in the *Evening News*, mentioned that he found his shoulders dusted with a white powder that came from the gallery, and other people in the stalls had a similar experience.

I left the box where I was sitting with my wife, David Belasco, and Seymour Hicks. When I reached the wings I found that Miss Taylor was being drowned by shouts from the gallery. I went on to the stage, and took Miss Taylor by the arm, and there was immediate silence.

"I have brought this great artist——" I began.

"That doesn't matter," interrupted Miss Taylor.

"I have brought her three thousand miles to appear in this play," I continued. "I will not have her insulted.

I shall ring the curtain down, and give the ' first night ' of this play at a later date." Plenty of cheering followed. I went on to say that I took all the blame if defects in the scenery had spoilt the view from the gallery during the first act. There were cries of, " We could see all right, Mr. Cochran " ; and one voice rang out clearly, saying, " There is an organised gang up here : they are not real first-night galleryites ! "

I said I didn't care who might be responsible, but I was not going to jeopardise the play's success and submit Miss Taylor to the possibility of more insults by continuing the play that night. Sir Alfred Butt stood up in the stalls, and made the rather tactless suggestion that I should go on with the play and turn the gallery out.

" This is not like England ! " protested Seymour Hicks from a box. " That is a fine sentiment, sir," put in Mr. Belasco, " and well put over ! "

Any doubt as to the demonstration being organised was settled by my manager, Mr. Clive McKee, who brought me a number of the bombs containing *asafœtida*, and tins charged with *poudre infernale*.

Afterwards, in her dressing-room, I found Miss Laurette Taylor in an arm-chair, overcome by hysteria, and surrounded by consoling friends, who were all expressing different theories as to the origin of the outrage.

Mr. Justice Horridge declared that it was a Sinn Fein outrage. It was, he felt sure, the beginning of a series of outrages which would be perpetrated in public places where prominent people might be expected to assemble. As the judge is affected with a nervous wink which he cannot control, it was thought at first that he was making this statement in a spirit of chaff, and there was a mild laugh. He made the same assertion more emphatically, again winking, which he couldn't help, and the laughter became louder. Another theory was that the " gods " were anti-American ; another that the riot was organised by pro-Germans against me, because not long before I had protested against German plays being done in London.

Somebody suggested that the disturbance must have been caused by some boxers who were dissatisfied with the decisions at the Holborn Stadium, but against that was the fact that when I spoke to the audience I had perfect quiet.

All sorts of people who had no business there got into Miss Taylor's dressing-room. I remember feeling a tug at my coat-tails, and, looking round, found an acquaintance who said he hadn't the pleasure of knowing Miss Taylor, and would be honoured if I would present him—this at a time when Miss Taylor was demanding that a well-known actress, who had said the wrong thing, should be got out of the room. "If they let her in again I shall go mad!" cried Laurette.

Then David Belasco knelt at Miss Taylor's feet and soothed her. "This is no anti-American demonstration," he said. "Everywhere I go I see evidence of Anglo-American friendship." He paused between his sentences, and the representatives of the American papers took full advantage of the pauses.

I assured Miss Taylor that the disturbance was not caused by the regular galleryites. To prove it, I begged her to come to the stage door, where a crowd of several hundreds stood waiting. She did so, and received sympathetic cheers, many people calling out, "It's not our fault, Miss Taylor. Believe us, we're terribly sorry."

I got Miss Taylor back to her rooms at the Berkeley Hotel. David Belasco and Major Walter Creighton, my confidential representative, accompanied us. Cyril Maude, who had heard of the disturbance, was already there, and soon we were joined by Haddon Chambers, Sir Gerald du Maurier, and Robert Loraine. "Who has done this foul thing?" said Loraine as he hurried in. "We will none of us play to-morrow," said Sir Gerald. "We will close the theatres as a protest!" Everybody agreed. Loraine had an alternative. "We will keep them open. Miss Taylor shall play in my theatre one night, and Wyndham's the next, and we will play at the Garrick when she plays at our theatres."

Ultimately it was decided to send a letter to the *Times*, and Walter Creighton was deputed to telephone the subject-matter to the editorial offices. He had an arduous task, because practically all the actor-managers of London were prompting him, altering the wording and punctuating his sentences with "Bravo!" and other words of approval. Finally the following letter was sent, and appeared:

"A THEATRICAL PROTEST

"To the Editor of the *Times*.

"Sir,—We beg that you will be good enough to permit us to express in your columns our extreme indignation on learning of the disgraceful scene of turbulence in the Garrick Theatre to-night, in consequence of which the curtain was rung down, and the performance brought to a premature conclusion.

"We do not presume to judge of the cause of the gallery's violently expressed opposition to the enterprise. Our present purpose is to protest with all the energy possible against the riotous and unmannerly proceedings by which an infinitesimal minority of the audience were able gravely to shock and inconvenience the majority of those present, and publicly insult a number of our brother and sister artists, including Miss Laurette Taylor, an exquisite and accomplished actress of the highest achievements, who has won her way at least as highly into the esteem and affection of the London public as she has among her own people across the Atlantic.—Your obedient servants,

"(Signed) Haddon Chambers,
Johnston Forbes-Robertson,
Gerald du Maurier,
Dennis Eadie,
Cyril Maude,
Robert Loraine."

The last incident of the night that I remember was Mr.

Hartley Manners, completely exhausted, slipping off an arm-chair on to the floor. We carried him to his bed.

That the American papers had made the most of the story was evident from a cable that I received next day from W. A. Brady. It ran: "All America applauds your splendid action."

What was at the back of the demonstration has never been disclosed. But a few days after the occurrence a man called on my manager and stated that, providing no advantage would be taken of the information, he was willing to say all he knew about it. He was brought to me, and I gave him my word—which I have kept—that I would not disclose his identity. He was the leader of a gang. He had, he said, been paid £50 to create a disturbance. He assured me that he had no idea that I had anything to do with the Garrick Theatre, or he would not have done the job for £500. Because of my association with boxing, he assured me that he and his "boys" had the greatest respect for me. "To prove this, Mr. Cochran," he said, "let me remind you that when you came on the stage the noise stopped. I could have fallen in a heap when I saw you, and I immediately called the gang off."

I asked him why the disturbance was so mild at the beginning of the first act, then ceased, then burst out so violently at the rise of the curtain on the second act. He declared that he had nothing to do with the disturbance at the commencement of the play. The remarks were from the ordinary gallery people, who wanted the act drop raised higher so that they could see. He did not arrive until the end of the first act, and gave no orders to start a disturbance until after the interval. He told me the name of the man who had paid him the £50—an Australian, who had left England. I swore not to disclose the name, and I have not done so. I tried to find out what reason this man might have for organising the attack, but entirely without success. I could not conceive of any grievance he might have against Miss Taylor, myself, or anybody associated with the play or the theatre. All I was ever

able to find out was that once, when I was in America, he called at my office to introduce an American actress with a view to an engagement.

A second first night of *One Night in Rome* was given on 3rd May. No actress can ever have had a more whole-hearted reception. There was universal enthusiasm, and Miss Taylor took advantage of the sympathetic attitude of the audience to make one of the most delightful curtain speeches ever made. Unhappily, *One Night in Rome* was not a good play, and was destined for a short run only. At the end of the minimum number of weeks which were provided for under my contract with Hartley Manners, I advised his wife and himself to accept the inevitable and withdraw the play. They were determined, however, to go on. Already my loss was considerable, and I was not prepared to continue; but, although I had an offer for the theatre at a profit rental of £200 per week, I let Mr. Manners have it at the bare rent which I was paying myself. The play ran for a few weeks longer to declining business.

My next production in London that year was *Cherry*—a musical comedy by Edward Knoblock, with music by Melville Gideon. The title took its name from that of the heroine—a coster girl. The first act showed a city wharf, and the last Hampstead Heath. The play had an enthusiastic first-night reception, and the most flattering press criticisms I have ever received for any of my productions; it was praise all the way with no qualifications. At a party, to which I went after the first performance, everybody congratulated me, and showed astonishment when I advised them to wait. "If we have a success," I said, "there will be a line at the box office to-morrow at eleven o'clock." At eleven o'clock the next morning I went to the theatre, and there was nothing doing. We had a poor house, except on Saturday nights, every night during *Cherry's* short run of two months. The play invariably aroused applause and laughter; but the public would not come.

On 3rd September of the same year I produced at the

Garrick another failure. This was *Her Dancing Man*, from the French of P. Armont and Jacques Bousquet. The play in the original was most amusing, but, perhaps, too Gallic for London. I blame myself entirely for its complete failure. It was badly cast, badly adapted, and badly produced. I am afraid that even then I was undertaking too much, and that my productions were not getting the personal attention I had given to my earlier successes.

CHAPTER XXVI

My Boxing Promotions at the Holborn Stadium begin in 1919 with the Beckett-Wells Match—Carpentier's Shouted Advice to Wells—What I paid the Boxers—Jack Bloomfield's Early Appearances—How Beckett beat Goddard—A Great Night at Olympia when Jimmy Wilde beat "Pal" Moore—What General Pershing said—A Remark by the Prince of Wales that showed his Knowledge of Boxing—£14,205 in Receipts—Negotiating for the Beckett-Carpentier Contest—Beckett defeats M'Goorty—M'Goorty's Letter to me—The Formidable Fred Fulton—Beckett and Goddard not to be drawn—The Classic Fight between Johnny Basham and Matt Wells—The many "Come Backs" of Bombardier Wells—A £30,000 Gate at the Carpentier-Beckett Fight—The Largest "Gate" known in this Country—Carpentier arrives for the Fight with Beckett—His Love of Music—A Practice before the Home Secretary—Bloomfield his Sparring Partner—Carpentier's Arm swells the Night before the Contest—Arnold Bennett's Description of the Memorable Scenes at the Holborn Stadium—The Prince of Wales replies to Calls for a Speech—His Talk with Mr. Harry Preston—Carpentier and the Police Affair—The French Lady at the Ring-side—Beckett beaten by a Simple Boxing Manœuvre—The Party after the Fight.

"LADIES! It is to you I dedicate this description; nor let it seem out of character for the fair to notice the exploits of the brave. Courage and majesty are the old English virtues; and may they never look askance on one another! Ye, fairest of the fair, loveliest of the lovely kind, ye practisers of soft enchantment, how many more ye kill with poisoned baits than ever fell in the ring; and listen with subdued air and without shuddering to a tale tragic in appearance and sacred in fancy."

Hazlitt was a master of virile English. Mostly he wrote about the stage, a stern, impeccable, but indefinitely sympathetic critic. If that wondrous pen could have described the diversions of the London of 1919, Hazlitt would, I feel, have accompanied me with as great pleasure

to the Holborn Stadium as to the Garrick Theatre, where Robert Loraine was playing *Cyrano de Bergerac*.

The paragraph that begins this chapter is the introduction to Hazlitt's description of his first fight. He could turn from the *Hamlet* of Edmund Kean to witness, and write a classic about, the fierce encounter between the Gasman and Bill Neat. And why not? Was not Cyrano the Game Chicken of his day? *Plus ça change!* It is but circumstance that differs.

On 27th February 1919 I began my direction of the Holborn Stadium with the match between Bombardier Billy Wells and Joe Beckett. Despite the times he had disappointed them, Wells was still the favourite with the public. The two idols of the ring were Wells and Carpentier; but until Wells had "come back," by beating one or two English heavy-weights, a match with the Frenchman seemed an absurdity.

The Bombardier was anxious to meet the Frenchman right away; but I wouldn't hear of this. Finally I promised him two or three matches at the Stadium, which, in the event of his being successful, were to lead up to another match with Carpentier. The available opponents were Arthur Townley, Frank Goddard, Joe Beckett, and Curphey. I gave Wells his choice for the first, and unhesitatingly he selected Joe Beckett. He was just his mark, he thought.

Wells and his manager, Jim Malony, astonished me by asking £1000 for the match. I ridiculed the suggestion, and got his signature for £600. I expected to get Beckett for about £100—but no such luck! And here and now I will answer the accusation often made against me that it was I who created the big-purse movement in this country. Indirectly I may have been the cause of it, because before I came into the game there was little opposition to the National Sporting Club, and directly it was known that I was in the field for matches promoters sprang up and raised the market price for boxers. I tried to get Mr. Mortimer, who was then managing Beckett, to listen to reason, but this proposed Wells-Beckett contest was already in the air

and fantastic sums were being talked about. Finally Mr. Mortimer, who was under the impression that Wells was getting £1000, said that he would take the same as Wells—whatever it was. Although I thought the price was more than double Beckett's worth, I agreed. Mortimer was astonished to find that Wells' figure was £600 ; but he proved to be a man of his word. As it happened, the match did not prove too expensive, as the gate reached £3344, 2s. The preliminary bouts of the evening cost me only £30.

Despite his confidence before the match, Wells, when he took the ring, was a monument of nervousness. Still, directly the bell went, he rushed in with a fair and square body blow. But Beckett was in superb trim, and the blow didn't hurt. Wells looked surprised, and then Beckett retaliated with a left hook. Georges Carpentier, who was sitting next to me, cried out, " Oh, Billie ! " Wells went down. He rose, and Beckett put him down again with another left hook. Wells was worried, and his legs were betraying him. He stepped and ran up against Beckett's right. Then, following advice shouted to him by Carpentier, he began to box and got in one or two lefts. Still Beckett did not seem to be worried. In the fourth round Wells got in a really beautiful left. " Give him another ! " yelled Carpentier, and Beckett for the first time looked to be in trouble. But in the fifth round Beckett got in a right, stepped back, and, as Wells came into clinch, brought his left across. Down the Bombardier went. He rose, but Beckett put him down again. He got up before ten seconds had been counted, but this time Beckett easily put him down for the full count.

Sitting near me that night were Sir Gerald du Maurier, Robert Loraine, and Mr. A. B. Walkley, who was, I believe, seeing his first fight. The crowd had hoped to see Wells win. Nevertheless, Beckett received an ovation. Before the match Beckett had signed a contract with me that in the event of beating Wells he would meet Goddard ; then should he be again successful he was to have the plum—the match with Georges Carpentier.

What tricks one's memory plays! These reminiscences have been dictated with no reference to data except verification by my book-keeper of dates and figures, and reference to scrap-books when I have quoted the press. Important milestones in my life have automatically recalled my next step. I did not think I had forgotten anything of importance until, searching for verification of some details in regard to my boxing promotion, I found that I had forgotten my first big boxing match at Olympia, which was not the Welsh-Ritchie contest for the light-weight championship of the world, which took place at Olympia on 7th July 1914, but the fight which wiped out, temporarily, the memory of Bombardier Wells' defeat by Georges Carpentier, and gave Harry Weldon his popular gag, "Remember what I did to Colin Bell."

Colin Bell was the Australian heavy-weight champion. The match took place at Olympia on 30th June, a week before the Welsh-Ritchie encounter. The purse was for £2000, to be divided 60 per cent. to the winner and 40 per cent. to the loser. I insisted upon each boxer depositing £250, and I in turn made a deposit of £500, to be paid to the boxers in the proportion of 50 per cent. each if I did not carry out my part of the contract. To make sure that my first big boxing programme at Olympia should be attractive, I supplemented Wells-Bell with a twenty-round contest between Harry Stone and Johnny Summers, for a purse of £500 and £250 a side.

Stone had twice defeated Summers on points in Australia, but Summers was now the holder of the welter-weight Lonsdale Belt. Stone had defeated Mat Wells, who beat Ray Bronson for the title in America.

The money I was offering for the two fights was considered enormous at the time. The day after the Summers-Stone articles were signed the *Sporting Life* said:

> "What a remarkable commentary upon the great growth of enthusiasm for the game Mr. Cochran's venture provides! A few years ago the idea that a

Caricature of Charles B. Cochran, by David Wilson

promoter could expend his thousands upon a programme with a good chance of getting a handsome return would have merely aroused an amused derision. But all that has altered, and Mr. Cochran's enterprise is typical of the great possibilities that are offered to-day. The public apparently cannot have enough of boxing ; even in the height of summer their appetite is not sated. In this particular case Mr. Cochran has laid out £2500 in purses for the two contests, a huge amount certainly, but in these days of the boxing boom who shall say that it does not represent a capital and sound investment ? He has done well to bring together Stone and Summers, for the victories obtained by the former at the expense of the Englishman in Australia caused a great deal of interest in this country, and not a little surprise."

That night of 30th June 1914, at Olympia, was the opening of the era of big fights. It seems difficult to realise to-day that there was a sufficiently strong feeling against boxing for a spectator in the first round of the heavy-weight contest to climb into the ring in an attempt to make a protest against the fight being held in a public place. He was hauled out by the journalists who sat round the ring.

The contests were announced through a megaphone by Father Boudier of St. Michael's, North London. The crowd of notabilities around the ring was a new spectacle for London. A writer in the *World* described the scene as follows :

" I reached my seat about 8.45 when the Summers-Stone fight had just commenced, but even then the vast building was fuller than I have ever seen it, and half an hour later one could not see a vacant place. Round the ring were well-known representatives of every calling—here an actor, there a jockey, a great artist comparing notes with a Hebrew financier, Guards-

men galore, lawyers, theatrical managers, journalists, and racing men. Into the dim recesses of the building rose tier upon tier of anxious, strained faces, and from different corners of the house a hoarse roar of applause and encouragement rang out as their fancy was seen to gain a momentary advantage.

"There was quite a sprinkling of the fair sex, some of them resplendent in jewellery and evening frocks, and, so far as this particular night was concerned, nothing occurred which could have been the slightest shock to their feelings, especially as none of them were seated in close proximity to the ring. It was a master-stroke of Mr. Charles Cochran, that prince of organisers, to have got a clergyman in full canonicals to officiate as M.C., and I fancy that Mr. Cochran was also responsible for the timely newspaper discussion on women and boxing matches."

Since then it has been the custom of every boxing promoter, other than myself, to announce before each match an enormous demand for seats from women. I have never seen at any match more than the "fair sprinkling" to which the writer in the *World* referred. The heavy-weights have always proved the magnet to the crowd, and it was the attraction of Wells and Bell which made the night a bigger financial success than the great night a few days later when Freddie Welsh of Pontypridd beat William Ritchie on points for the light-weight championship of the world. Although there was no comparison in the quality of the boxing on the two occasions, the Wells-Bell Summers-Stone night was not without its sensation. In one of the preliminary events Nipper Joseph was knocked out of the ring among the spectators. This was an *apératif* to the incident of the black-bearded protester who climbed into the ring later. Then there was the joy of the crowd in seeing their favourite, the Bombardier, "come back," as they thought. One of our best informed writers on boxing, describing the fight, said :

"By his victory Wells re-establishes himself as a magnificent boxer, who ought to be World's Champion. He never looked like losing last night. In the very first round, four to one on Wells with the bookmaker could find no takers."

Before the match it was considered an even money chance.

In the second round Wells got home a terrific right that landed squarely on Bell's jaw, and the referee, Mr. Eugène Corri, counted Bell out. Wells' last previous appearance at Olympia had seen his remarkable defeat at the hands of Gunner Moir on 11th January 1911. The Summers-Stone contest went the full distance, and the referee gave it a draw. Stone surprised Harry Preston and other ring-side spectators by appearing before the contest with a cigar in his mouth.

I followed up the Wells-Beckett match, at the Holborn Stadium on 22nd February 1919, with a number of programmes which varied in interest.

On 27th March, as a preliminary to the fifteen-round contest between Boy M'Cormick and Augie Ratner, I introduced Corporal J. Blumenfeld, paying him £20— to meet Dusty Smith, Eddie M'Goorty's sparring partner. Blumenfeld floored his man in the second round with a right to the chin, and, although not successful in gaining a knock-out, he won the ten-round contest on points. Blumenfeld was a young man of considerable promise, and I kept him constantly working. He has since become better known as Jack Bloomfield. The Ratner-M'Cormick affair was not thrilling. Ratner was far too clever for his opponent, and won easily on points.

On 10th April I put up a purse of £500 for Tommy Noble and Criqui. Noble gained a knock-out in the nineteenth round. It was a pretty rough contest, and Noble went into a clinch at every chance. On one occasion, accidental or otherwise, he backheeled his opponent.

Before Noble and Criqui, Georges Papin met Ernie Rice

in a fifteen-round contest. The Hounslow man was the stronger, but he hadn't a fraction of the Frenchman's skill, and the referee awarded the match to Papin on points.

There was another Anglo-French match which had an unfortunate finish, as in the third round the referee disqualified Raymond Vittet. His opponent, Marriott, had swung the Frenchman round, and as Vittet wrenched himself free his elbow collided with Marriott's jaw. The decision had a mixed reception. The receipts for the evening were £807, 12s.

As a theatrical manager I have had experience of the difficulty of casting a play, but to cast a boxing match is still more difficult, particularly when trying to find an opponent for a boxer of outstanding merit. Apart from the heavy-weights, the one certain drawing card at this time was Jimmy Wilde. But unless one went to America a suitable opponent was hard to find. On 22nd April Wilde signed with me to box Pete Herman or "Pal" Moore, who was the American bantam-weight champion, for a purse of £5000. There was a condition that Herman made 8 stone 5 lb. at the ring-side. Wilde's manager, Mr. Ted Lewis, authorised me to issue a challenge to Moore and Herman for a contest under the conditions stated.

Wilde was anxious to have a match in England before he met Moore, so I secured Alf Mansfield. The match was criticised in some quarters, but I had the support of a good substantial portion of the press. As the National Sporting Club sent all the way to America for Mansfield to meet Wilde at the Club for the belt I think criticism of the match was answered. As one of the best of the boxing writers said, "If Cochran is wrong, he is erring in good company."

From the commercial point of view the match was not successful. I paid Wilde £1000, Mansfield £125, and the gate came to £1000, 1s.—£25 less than for my next match at the Stadium, in which the Scotsman, Walter Ross, met Criqui. I was not greatly astonished because I did not believe in the match as a first-class drawing card. Still I knew it would provide good boxing, and I had promised Wilde

an opportunity of picking something up before he met Moore or Herman. He had good offers to go to America, and I wanted to give him an inducement to stay in England.

The match was justified from a boxing point of view. Those who had said that I ought to be arrested for taking money under false pretences in promoting the match would, I think, gladly have paid double for their seats had they known what was in store for them. At no time did Mansfield look like winning, but he always made matters interesting.

In the first round, coming out of a clinch, Mansfield thought he had found an opening and hooked his left to Jimmy's head. Wilde's reply came like a flash. First a left, and then lefts and rights to head and body. Mansfield began to hit back, but Wilde always got away from his punches and drove his opponent before him until the gong sounded. Early in the second round Wilde dropped Mansfield with a right to the chin. The remaining rounds were all lively, but towards the end of the seventh round Mansfield was obviously weakening. In the ninth round Mansfield, full of fight, fairly threw himself at Wilde, driving him against the ropes and hitting out with great determination. It was in the thirteenth round that Wilde punished Mansfield most severely. After being knocked down twice in this round Mansfield fell flat on his back from a right, and the towel being thrown into the ring Mr. Corri signalled that the affair was over.

After the sensational defeat of Bombardier Wells by Joe Beckett, I matched Beckett against Frank Goddard. When the match was announced the N.S.C. matched Goddard with Jack Curphey for the Lonsdale Heavy-Weight Belt. This was the Club's reply to me for daring to promote the Beckett-Goddard match. "Thesus" wrote in a sporting paper:

> "It isn't an answer; it's merely a squeak, and it's certainly not a sporting thing to do. Joe Beckett is morally and legally the heavy-weight champion;

for Wells forfeited the title when he so signally failed at the Holborn Stadium to sustain his claim. Can you, by any stretch of the imagination, call Curphey a potential champion?

"The match at the Stadium upset the apple-cart, and the Club has retaliated in a way peculiarly its own. It has to be remembered that these Lonsdale Belts are the property of the N.S.C., and, that being so, the authorities are entitled to dispose of them as they like. But they must be disposed of as Lonsdale Belts, and not as *championship emblems*."

Fortunately for me, Goddard beat Curphey, and the interest in the Beckett-Goddard meeting became very big. Apart from the desire to see those two big fellows, both hard hitters, there was the additional fact that the winner was to meet Carpentier. From the point of view of boxing ability, £500 would have been a generous purse; but I was not the only person who realised what a drawing card this contest would be, and I was forced to pay Beckett £2500 and Goddard £2000.

Preceding Goddard and Beckett I had a contest between Arthur Townley and the Australian, Hardwick. Townley at that time was looked on as a possible runner-up for the heavy-weight championship. The purse for that match was £250. Corporal Blumenfeld, who by this time had become Jack Bloomfield, got £15 for meeting Drake. The other preliminary bout was Keller and MacDonald.

The entire prize money for the night was just under £5000. The gate realised £8001, 7s., so that after something from the pictures and the programmes there was a comfortable profit even after paying the big rental which was demanded for Olympia.

Although the Beckett-Goddard fight on 17th June was a short one, the spectators had plenty of excitement for their money. Frank Goddard, ex-Guardsman, twenty-three years of age, 6 feet 3½ inches in height, weight round about 14 stone, was a magnificent specimen of a man. Joe

Beckett was a big man, though not of such a towering kind. In the second round, with the spectators strung to the highest pitch, Goddard, as Mr. Bennison described him in the *Daily Telegraph*, "his mouth red with blood, his massive face wrinkled and with pain writ large on it," was knocked out.

At the start Goddard walked confidently towards Beckett. A left lead shot out from Goddard, the men fell into a clinch and Beckett warded off some upper cuts. Beckett, not lacking in confidence, worked round the ring with Goddard as a pivot. He tried a left lead and Goddard punched a terrific right to the body. There appeared to be no effect from this blow, and Beckett, getting close, got in some tremendous upper cuts. Goddard all the time appeared quite contemptuous. At the end of the round both men were bleeding from the mouth.

Goddard started the second round with a tremendous right to the ribs, but Beckett got a left hook to the jaw. Goddard crumpled up, but rose before the count of nine. Beckett was on him like a tiger, using both hands. Goddard stumbled round the ring like a drunken man. Beckett gave him no peace. There was a moment when he seemed to pull himself together; but his jaw was always a splendid mark for Beckett. Catching a straight left to the face, the big man fell forward to meet a right hook, and this time he dropped like a log on the floor. At the count of nine he made a slight attempt to get up, but he was unable to rise. He was so dazed that he didn't realise the fight was over. Most of the boxing writers expressed the hope that this match would be a lesson to Goddard to learn defence, but I am afraid he has not profited by the advice.

One month later, on 17th July, Jimmy Wilde and "Pal" Moore met at Olympia. Articles of Agreement were signed at the Piccadilly Hotel on 1st July. The contest was for twenty rounds. The purse was £5000 (60 per cent. to the winner, 40 per cent. to the loser) and £500 a side. The match was to be under the National Sporting

Club rules, with 6 oz. gloves. Wilde probably weighed about 7 st. 4 lb.; Moore weighed 8 st. 4 lb. at the ring-side.

The Prince of Wales, the Duke of York, and General Pershing were present at this match. The Prince entered the Royal Box as the men took their corners. The entire audience stood up and cheered. Somebody began "For He's a Jolly Good Fellow." The familiar song was sung enthusiastically. The Prince gave General Pershing the place of honour in the Royal Box, and there were more cheers. Then came another dramatic moment. The hundreds of Welshmen who had travelled to London to see Jimmy Wilde, their "Tylorstown Terror," sang "Land of my Fathers."

I had received the Prince when he arrived, and he graciously invited me to remain and see the fight from the Royal Box.

For the first ten rounds Wilde showed an extraordinary supremacy. At the opening the little Welshman led left and right, and got in punches with both hands. Obviously he puzzled Moore with his uncanny sense of distance. Late in the first round Moore got a right into the body, but at the end of the second round it looked any odds on Wilde. The fourth round was contested at a terrific pace, and there were some fierce passages of hard hitting. Moore was prone to use the open glove, and was cautioned for it by the referee. Wilde continued to put his wonderful left into the American's face, and his blows always had more in them than those of Moore. In the tenth round Mr. Corri again warned Moore for hitting with the open glove, and in the eleventh round the referee ignored shouts of "foul." In the fourteenth round Wilde began to bleed at the mouth, and seemed exhausted with his efforts to bring down an opponent over a stone heavier than himself. In the sixteenth round Moore cut him across the nose—the only time in his boxing career the little Welshman has ever been marked, and Moore was fighting so furiously it seemed that his strength might gain him victory. The excitement became intense. But the last four rounds

showed us the ring marvel that Wilde was. His splendid finish can never have been excelled. From some unknown source he seemed to gather a supply of new energy, with so dazzling a combination of fury and science, that Moore came near to being knocked out twice in the last two rounds. In the last round Wilde fought like a demon. He scored with left and right, and the last couple of seconds, with a terrific right, he came near to knocking Moore out. Mr. Corri gave the decision to Wilde. Lots of people clambered into the ring, cheering lustily, and as they left the building Jimmy Wilde's faithful Welsh followers again struck up " Land of my Fathers."

The Prince of Wales followed the fight with interest and knowledge, as was evident from his remark to me at the finish, that he thought Wilde had won because of his clean hitting. The Prince asked me to convey to Wilde his congratulations, and also to deliver a message of appreciation of his courage and skill to " Pal " Moore. As General Pershing left the box he said to me, " This is, indeed, a great day for the friendship of America and Great Britain." The receipts for the night were £14,205, 8s. 6d.

Turning over a scrap-book to verify a date I came upon an article from a weekly paper of June 1919. The writer found my two passions for boxing and the theatre strange bed-fellows. But the ring has always fascinated me since the glimpses I got at Brighton of Jem Smith in the days when he was champion of England. When quite young I bought regularly the *Licensed Victuallers' Gazette* to read descriptions of fights, and such taste as I have in literature was developed by my passion for boxing, because it made me take to George Borrow—pietist, poet, pedestrian, Puritan, and pugilist. The manner in which he sealed his friendship with Mr. Petulengro in the blood of a fierce fight impressed me strangely. What a vigorous aspect pugilism wore at that time !

The next programme which I had conceived after the Wilde-Moore fight was working out well. I had created an interest in boxing, greater than had ever existed before.

Joe Beckett (the match between Goddard and Curphey for the Lonsdale Belt notwithstanding) was firmly established as the British champion, and his next hope was to attempt to become champion of Europe, by meeting Carpentier. I had an agreement with the Frenchman; I had arranged terms with Beckett before he met Wells; and I had secured Olympia for 2nd September. The big event was awaited with expectancy. Carpentier was still in the army, but he was soon to get his discharge. The only thing that could upset my plans would be the possible defeat of Carpentier in the contest in Paris by that admirable pugilist, Dick Smith. Such a turn-up did not seem likely; but in boxing one never knows, especially as Carpentier had had so little ring practice. Well, Carpentier beat Dick Smith all right at the Cirque de Paris, knocking him out in the eighth round; but it was far from being a convincing performance, and Bernard Mortimer, to whom Beckett largely owed his then happy position, returned from Paris very pleased with the prospects of his man. Beckett, who had been to Paris with Mr. Mortimer to see the fight, also became additionally confident. When he was introduced to Descamps he did not hesitate to intimate that Carpentier was going to have something tougher than Dick Smith when the French champion met him. M. Victor Breyer, the editor of the *Echo des Sports*, declared that, although Carpentier was never in danger of being beaten by Dick Smith, he had to work very hard to win. M. Breyer was worried about Carpentier's poor timing, and the frequency with which he missed, because one of the Frenchman's great qualities had been the sureness of his hitting. When he did hit it was with full force, such as only a cast-iron man could survive. The truth of the matter was that Carpentier was not fit when he met Smith. Moreover, he confessed to me that that night something in the nature of stage-fright overcame him. The ring, to which he had been accustomed practically since childhood, had lost its familiar aspect. A good many of our heavy-weights, who fight only one or twice a year, might note that confession

of Carpentier's. That tense moment, when entering the ring for a big fight, before an excited, expectant throng, and under the burning arc lights! It is a testing moment when plans for offence and defence mean nothing, and cool action alone counts. How many flurried mistakes some of our big men have made on these occasions—stupidities they wouldn't have committed had they been fighting regularly.

After the Dick Smith match with Carpentier the English press showed a decided leaning towards Joe Beckett. The tendency of the comment was that unless Carpentier improved on his form against Smith, Beckett ought to win.

Interest in the event increased daily. I expected a £40,000 "gate"; I might even exceed that figure. The interest had gone far beyond the regular supporters of the boxing crowd, because Beckett appeared to have a good chance of winning. And therein lies one of the secrets of boxing promotion. Boxing connoisseurs alone would never fill Olympia. One of the contestants must have a personality that influences the public outside boxing circles, and there must be an intense desire to see him win, or an intense desire to see him beaten. Billy Wells drew the crowd always, because they hoped to see him win. There are other boxers who draw most when it is thought they are going to be beaten. In the case of Beckett and Carpentier two elements fanned the interest. First, the overwhelming personality of Carpentier; second, the hope that a British boxer might achieve supremacy in the most British of British sports.

And then when everything promised so well Descamps declared that Carpentier would not be fit enough to box on the arranged date—2nd September. I had paid a substantial deposit for Olympia, and I should lose that unless I could find an efficient substitute match; by experience I knew that not many matches would fill Olympia. But the hardest blow was that I could not get another date at Olympia until the summer of the following year.

I went to Paris to see Descamps and Carpentier, and met Descamps at the offices of the *Echo des Sports*. After going thoroughly into the reasons why Carpentier asked

for postponement, I felt satisfied that they were insurmountable and justifiable. Carpentier was not yet free from his military obligations; he was not in the best of condition when he met Dick Smith, and it would still be impossible for him to do himself justice in training in the short time at his disposal; also it would be unfair to the public to have a match, involving the heavy-weight championship of Europe with one of the principals not fit.

The postponement of the match created rumours that Carpentier was afraid of Beckett. I did not leave Paris, however, until M. Descamps, on behalf of Carpentier, had signed to meet Beckett any time after 1st November, subject to two months' notice being given by me. He also deposited £1000 as a forfeit in the event of non-fulfilment of the contract. Moreover, Descamps offered to bet any sum from £500 to £1000 that Carpentier would beat Beckett. Descamps and Carpentier also signed a contract with me that, in the event of Carpentier beating Beckett, the Frenchman would meet Jack Dempsey.

When I got back to London my first step was to arrange a programme for Olympia for 2nd September. I offered a purse of £2000 for a twenty-round contest between Beckett and Eddie M'Goorty. To my surprise the American demanded £2000 win, lose, or draw. I flatly refused to create such a bad precedent. As an alternative I offered the same purse for Beckett and Fred Fulton, the giant American heavy-weight; but this did not please Beckett. In a few days M'Goorty reconsidered his position, and not only accepted my purse but backed himself for £1000; he deposited that sum with a sporting paper, and Beckett covered it. The purse of £2000 was to be divided—60 per cent. to the winner, 40 per cent. to the loser.

A great number of seats had been sold for the Beckett-Carpentier match, and I had no alternative but to offer to refund the money—the most disagreeable thing a showman may have to do. I was not underestimating the value of Carpentier as a drawing card, and although many of the writers on boxing declared they would rather pay to

see Beckett and M'Goorty than Beckett and Carpentier I was certain that the big public did not feel that way. So I set about organising an enormous triple bill. Fred Fulton had arrived in England, and was anxious for a match. I provided him with an opponent in Arthur Townley. Beckett, being matched with M'Goorty, had a good excuse for side-stepping the huge American, while Goddard flatly refused to meet him. As another trump card I matched Walter Ross, the bantam-weight champion of Great Britain, with Charles Ledoux, bantam-weight champion of Europe. The boxing scribes said I was mad. Said one :

> " Pique or bad judgment ? One or the other is responsible for the mammoth programme which Mr. C. B. Cochran is offering the boxing public at Olympia on 2nd September. How otherwise can you account for it ? If he is piqued at losing his pet match, Carpentier and Beckett, he is selecting a very expensive method of gratifying it.
>
> " Perhaps ' C. B.' has it in his mind that Carpentier is a better box-office card than M'Goorty. The event may prove that he is wrong. Most experts will agree that he is, for who would want to see the Carpentier, who took eight rounds to beat Dick Smith in the same ring, with the man who so easily beat Wells and Goddard ? And the Frenchman knows this, for he turned the contract down on the very transparent excuse of military duties."

Nevertheless I went ahead and advertised my triple bill. The folly of my prodigality was discussed so much in the press that the *Daily Mirror* actually had an interview with me as to my sanity. It was headed :

" I AM NOT MAD."

" MR. COCHRAN DEFENDS HIS AMAZING BOXING PROGRAMME."

Meanwhile my sanity was being proved at various booking offices. Seats went like hot cakes, and there were

comparatively few applications for money sent in for the Carpentier fight to be returned. At that time I sold seats for my fights at all my theatres, as well as at the Holborn Stadium. I knew that I should have to mark down my two-guinea seats to a guinea, and my guinea seats to half a guinea as the day drew nearer. I could fill Olympia—but not at Carpentier prices.

Then came another blow. Ledoux hurt his hand, and his contest with Ross had to be postponed. Fortunately I had matched Johnny Basham, the welter-weight champion, with Francis Charles, a Frenchman, for a fight later in the season at the Holborn Stadium, and I was able to bring this contest forward for the Olympia evening. Basham was highly popular, and, although the bout was not likely to draw like Ross and Ledoux, it was the best possible substitute, so that I still had one of the strongest programmes ever presented in London. It seemed now that nothing more could happen to mar the success of my venture; but no boxing promoter can sleep soundly until the match is over. Fifteen days before the match I read in my morning paper that M'Goorty, who I understood had begun training at Maidenhead, had been convicted at Bow Street on a charge of drunkenness. This was the cruellest blow of all. After such a thing, people would ask how was it possible for M'Goorty, not a young man, to be ready to fight an invariably fit boxer like Beckett? M'Goorty wrote me a letter, which was in accord with his plea at the Police Court. I think it is a letter worthy of publication. It ran:

"DEAR MR. COCHRAN,—An explanation is due to you with regard to my conviction on a charge of drunkenness. I was not drunk. I attended a farewell dinner given to my friend, Augie Ratner, who left this morning for the States. In view of my forthcoming contest with Beckett I drank very temperately indeed, as the people who were present will tell you. I will ask you this question, Mr. Cochran. Do you think that if I had been drunk and incapable as described on the charge sheet, my friends would have

allowed me to walk from the Strand to Tottenham Court Road? Of course not. I must have been a victim of the heat wave. Anyway, I knew that I was not drunk, and that is why I demanded to see the doctor. I pleaded guilty in court because I wanted to escape publicity; but I was unlucky again.

"But don't be alarmed, Mr. Cochran. I shall be fit to fight the fight of my life on 2nd September. I feel fairly fit to-day, and I think I have shaken off the effects of my heat stroke, but I shall not start to train seriously until next Monday. I go stale if I have more than a fortnight's hard work. Don't worry, I shall be fit; and, as proof of my confidence, I will post the remaining £750 of my £1000 side stake on Monday next, and put my own dough down if I do not hear from my backer before then.—Yours very truly,

"EDDIE M'GOORTY."

The Bow Street incident unquestionably affected the interest in the fight. Nevertheless, the gate receipts amounted to £18,680, 4s.; £4400 more than for the fight of a decade—that between Wilde and Moore. Even Wilde, in his zenith, had not a following much beyond that of the boxing connoisseurs.

In addition to the £2000 purse for Beckett and M'Goorty the Basham-Charles contest cost me £825, and Townley and Fulton £1250—of which Townley got £500. When Townley beat Curzon at the Holborn Stadium I paid him £175. It was only the size of the purse that induced him to take a hiding from Fulton. When I signed Townley to meet Fulton I agreed to give him a match against Bombardier Wells and the French heavy-weight, Balzac, for each of which he was to get £250. On the day of the fight the *Times* devoted a leader on "The Ring." It concluded with the words:

> "But boxing is more than merely a popular spectacle. It is one of the customs which have developed the national character in the right direction."

There had been a lot of talk about the formidable stature of Fulton, and all the boxing experts were keen to see what he could do. He was not so much heavier than Townley; but he made short work of the Englishman. Townley rushed in at once and tried to land a decisive blow on the body. There was a minute's in-fighting, then a break-away. Townley again rushed in, to be met with a hard left-handed punch. This happened once more, and then Fulton, with a grim smile, put the Englishman out with a left on the jaw and a heavy right-handed punch.

I got Beckett and M'Goorty into the ring a little before nine o'clock, and after a really fine contest Beckett knocked M'Goorty out in the seventeenth round. It was a triumph for youth and strength. Only M'Goorty's skill and ring-craft kept him going for so long. Each boxer had his partisans; opinion generally favoured Beckett, but there were Americans who offered odds on M'Goorty.

Basham well beat Charles on points after a spirited contest. Charles was plucky and strong to the last, and he cleverly evaded a knock-out.

Altogether it was a great night, and the tone of the press the next day was of a most congratulatory character. The arrangements by which the public saw boxing in comfort were particularly praised. The boxing had been of a good quality, and the third successive victory of Beckett still further encouraged the hope that we might have a British heavy-weight champion. After M'Goorty's defeat I heard £600 to £400 offered and taken on Beckett beating Carpentier. I in fact was made stake-holder.

Up to this time I had engaged all the boxers for the preliminary bouts of my programmes, as well as arranging the main events; but with several autumn productions needing my personal attention, with the Carpentier-Beckett date and venue still to be arranged, and the further prospect of a trip to America to fix a match with Dempsey and the winner, it was essential that I should get some expert assistance for my boxing ventures. Administration, the seating arrangements, and what in the theatre we would call

" the front of the house duties " were in the capable hands of my general manager, Mr. Clive R. McKee and of Mr. Charles B. Williams ; but none of us had time to haggle with small boxers, and I am afraid that to get a signature quickly I was often inclined to pay £12, where £8 would have been considered generous. I had no intention of allowing the making of the big matches to go out of my own hands ; but I engaged Major Arnold Wilson as manager of the Stadium. I left it to him to arrange all the small bouts, and was grateful to him for any preliminary negotiations he conducted in regard to the main contest. His services were most valuable, and his knowledge of boxing and boxers enabled him to arrange a series of very attractive programmes at the Holborn Stadium.

After a short summer closure I reopened the Holborn Stadium on 18th September with the postponed match between Walter Ross of Glasgow, the holder of the British bantam-weight championship and Lonsdale Belt, and Eugène Criqui of France. The match drew a gate of £1025. Before the contest I announced from the ring that the postponed match for the heavy-weight championship of Europe, between Joe Beckett and Georges Carpentier, would take place at the Holborn Stadium on 4th December.

Carpentier had declared himself ready to meet Beckett any time after November. I could not get Olympia until May. Beckett was becoming restless, and talked of other fights if he could not get Carpentier. I was afraid, too, that Carpentier might be tempted to go to America. There was enormous interest in the meeting, and I feared that one or both of the idols might be knocked off their pedestals if I waited too long ; so, both men being ready, I announced the match for a building which would hold about three thousand people, when it could easily have filled one holding thirty thousand.

The Criqui-Ross match was of a most sporting character. Two hundred pounds a side had been posted, as well as a weight forfeit of £100 each—in case either man was more than 8 st. 6 lb. at noon. Criqui's form was a revelation to

those who had seen him with Tom Noble in the same arena. He had the advantage in height and reach, and frequently he got through Ross' guard with a fast and accurate left, and he was always side-stepping his opponent smartly and cleverly. Ross was very aggressive in the first three rounds; but he did not upset the coolness of the Frenchman. In the third round Criqui sent Ross down for a count of six, and, as the fight went on, Ross wasted a deal of energy with wild rushes. In the fourteenth round Criqui sent two rights to the jaw. Ross was badly shaken, but recovering made a fierce attack upon the Frenchman, who retreated. But springing in again, Criqui sent the Britisher down with a terrific right to the jaw. Every one present had the idea that Ross was out; Criqui also thought he had won, for he assisted in carrying his opponent to the corner. The seconds climbed into the ring. It was then that the timekeeper pointed out to the referee, Mr. Corri, that the round had ended at the count of seven in time to save Ross. The noise had been so great that the gong was not heard.

Mr. Corri ordered the men to continue; but Ross was in a hopeless condition when he came up, and the Frenchman put him down again with a right to the jaw.

I had arranged to give Bombardier Wells yet another chance to "come back," and had matched him with Jack Curphey. I paid the boxers £800. The Bombardier being still a magnet, the gate amounted to £1508. At the ring-side were Joe Beckett, Frank Goddard, and Fred Fulton, the American. Fulton got up and issued a challenge that he would meet Goddard any time before 11th November, and said he would wager £1000 to £100 that he would beat him. Goddard was not to be drawn; but Beckett could not be restrained from jumping into the ring and talking about "hot air." He did not, however, express any desire to meet the big American.

Wells showed himself to be the same old enigma. One minute there were flashes of rare boxing skill, the next the Bombardier fought like a novice. However, he finished

Curphey in the second round with a right-handed punch, and, in the enthusiasm that followed, one heard talk about another match with Beckett.

The following week I gave followers of boxing another opportunity to see Fred Fulton in the ring. I put the big Australian heavy-weight, Gordon Coghill, against him. But Fulton knocked out the Australian in the third round by a left hook to the chin. This match drew a few pounds under £1000, and I paid the men £600.

On 13th November Johnny Basham defended his title of welter-weight champion of Great Britain against another clever performer, Matt Wells. The match was for £100 a side, and my purse was £700. The boxing was of first-class quality, and the rounds kept fluctuating. By the end, Basham had a good lead on points, and the referee, Mr. J. T. Hulls, gave him the decision. Wells' supporters made considerable clamour.

Carpentier had now arrived to start his training for the match with Beckett, and I introduced him and Beckett in the ring before Basham and Matt Wells began their bout; also announcing that the fight would be refereed by Mr. B. J. Angle.

The following week the interest in Bombardier Billy Wells was again demonstrated by the £1745 "gate" that was taken when he met Arthur Townley.

Isn't it curious that the constantly disappointing heavy-weights should draw these gate receipts, whereas a classic match, like Basham and Matt Wells, a week previously, should produce only £1090?

Townley had made a good impression a few weeks earlier at the Stadium by knocking out Balsac in three rounds.

The tremendous enthusiasm which greeted Wells' victory indicated that, in the general opinion, the Bombardier was on the road to regain his lost honours. Reams were written about his "temperament," about his distrust of his own powers, his tenderness of heart, and disinclination to inflict pain. Certainly it was one of the most

interesting heavy-weight fights I had staged at the Stadium. Townley was game all the way through, but in the sixth round it was apparent to everybody, except, perhaps, Wells, that Townley had "shot his bolt." Yet Wells remained cautious. In the eighth round, Townley was sent down for a count of eight, and a beautifully timed right to the chin dropped him for a count of nine. When he rose he could only lean back on the ropes with his gloves to his face, but the Bombardier held off in inexplicable fashion, and in the ninth round Townley actually got home several jabs to the face. Finally, Wells sent his man down twice for a count of nine, and, the referee intervening, the towel was thrown in. This was a fight that went far to keep alive the interest in the "big men." Wells fought on percentage, and received £610; Townley was paid £250.

The Carpentier-Beckett affair was due in two weeks; but, in between, I gave my Holborn patrons a splendid night—a meeting between Tommy Noble and Tibby Watson of Australia. Noble boxed thoroughly well, and had need of all his knowledge, for whenever he eased up the little Australian came back with the utmost fury. The match was one of those dear to the boxing "fan." In the eighteenth round Noble brought off the punch he had been working for. He concealed his intention so cleverly that it came as a surprise to Watson. Watson was forcing hard, and making Tommy retreat to his corner; then, as Watson rushed him, trying to pin him against the post, Noble pulled back his left shoulder, changed feet, and shot a short punch to Watson's face. The Australian went down full length, and remained unconscious until he was carried to his corner. This was another evening which was good for the sport, and showed a satisfactory profit for me. The gate receipts were £925, and the bouts cost me under £500.

The Carpentier-Beckett match was by this time one of the topics of the day. The interest it aroused has never been approached, before or since, by any boxing match in this country, nor has been exceeded anywhere, only by the

Dempsey-Carpentier fight in New Jersey; and that match may be said to have sprung out of the Holborn Stadium contest, because the winner of the Carpentier-Beckett fight was to be matched with Dempsey. I had secured contracts with both Beckett and Carpentier for a meeting with the American champion.

I cannot imagine any arena in the world so big that it would not have been filled at that time by the Beckett-Carpentier match. Yet it was to take place in the little Holborn Stadium. When I announced my prices—ring-side seats twenty-five guineas and standing room five guineas—some people shook their heads. But I could have sold another thousand seats at twenty-five guineas, had they been available. As for the standing room at five guineas, tickets went like hot cakes. The gate on the night was very little short of £30,000, which stands, I believe, as a record for this country even now.

Carpentier arrived in London on the night of 6th November. He was in perfect condition after his work at his favourite training quarters, La Guerche. There he had led an all-day, open-air life. He is never happier than when tramping the countryside with a dog and a gun. Although there was the rigour of hard training at La Guerche, Descamps robbed the process of much of its Spartan-like nature. The evenings were spent in the café with the youth of the neighbourhood, or there would be musical evenings at home, and Carpentier is excessively fond of music.

There was a tumultuous reception at Victoria when Carpentier arrived, and another that night when he took his seat in a box at the London Pavilion. He had to come on the stage and say a few words in French to the audience. These were translated by Delysia.

I had secured quarters for him at Stanmore, but he was never quite happy there. He liked to train in private; and all day long he was worried by visitors. Nevertheless he managed to make his rooms much like his home at La Guerche. Descamps' delightful old mother-in-law came

along to take charge of the cuisine, and Carpentier had his masseur Gus Wilson, and, as his principal sparring partner, Jack Bloomfield.

All kinds of presents poured into the training quarters at Stanmore ; but the wily Descamps was always suspicious of gifts of food.

During his stay at Stanmore Carpentier went one Saturday afternoon to have a look at the Stadium. He brought with him Lesnères, the Belgian middle-weight ; Martin, a big Frenchman ; and Jack Bloomfield. Among the very few people present were Mr. Shortt, the Home Secretary. For an hour Carpentier shadow-boxed, sparred, skipped, and went through physical exercises. He was not out to impress the lookers-on, but to do his regular work. Those who were there were satisfied that there was no ground for the rumour that the Carpentier of pre-war days was no more.

Beckett trained at Southampton in the local baths before a constant stream of visitors. It struck me that he was training more for the applause of the gallery than by way of preparation for his match. He was delighted when he punished a sparring partner. On the last day of his training I motored to Southampton with George Graves and Tom Webster. Beckett's supporters told us stories of what he had done to his sparring partners.

Beckett gave us an exhibition with Gus Platts, who seemed to hit him when he liked. " If he boxes like that with Carpentier," said Tom Webster, " the match will not last very long."

The headings of the newspapers as the match drew near are interesting to look back upon. " A Topic of the Hour," said the *Daily Mail*. " Why Beckett likes to be Hit Hard," said the *Evening News*. " Is Carpentier too fit ? " was another. " Carpentier cool, while Beckett boasts," was yet another.

It was open knowledge that Descamps had come to London to see Beckett and Goddard ; Carpentier had seen Beckett beat Wells, and also had taken another look at

him when he gave a sparring exhibition with his brother George in Paris. Moreover, it was known that Eddie M'Goorty had been engaged by Carpentier as a sparring partner at La Guerche, but had spent only a day or two there. All sorts of tales were afloat as to why M'Goorty did not stay longer. Some said that Carpentier sacked him because he took liberties in boxing. Others said that he received such a towelling that he refused to go on. A great deal of Beckett's confidence was built up on the fact that he had beaten the American to impotence in seventeen rounds. Beckett was indignant if any one discounted this feat by saying that M'Goorty was unfit. " No unfit man could have taken what I gave him," he said. The opinion of M'Goorty, as one who knew both men, was valued highly, and I think had much to do with establishing Beckett as favourite. As much as three to one was laid on Beckett; but I think the prevailing odds were about 100 to 80. I was paying Carpentier £5000 and Beckett £3000.

It was not my practice to bet on fights I promoted. I did not want a wrong impression to be created. In this case, however, I had taken from a friend in the early days of the match a bet of £800 to £600—laid on Beckett. In my own mind I had never a doubt, from the moment I saw that Carpentier was fit, as to the result. The day after George Graves and I went to Southampton to see Beckett spar, the comedian telephoned me that he was with a man who had £1000 to put on Beckett. Could I place it? The French contingent, I told him, would be arriving the next day, and I had no doubt that they would be glad to cover it. So Graves' friend came to my office with £1000 in banknotes. He asked me to put it on at odds of £1000 to £800. I offered to give him a receipt, but he said that that wasn't necessary. " Just send me a wire at six o'clock on the day of the match, if I am not on," he said. I put the money in my safe, and I did not telegraph to him. The Carpentier-Beckett match, therefore, was a good night's work for me.

On the day of the match I had some tremors, because

the night before Carpentier's right arm swelled, causing him much pain. His doctor, who had come from Paris, applied hot poultices, and Gus Wilson massaged him. In the morning the swelling had been reduced, but the arm was discoloured; it was painted over so as not to arouse suspicion.

As the *Times* said, the day after the match, the Holborn Stadium was that night the centre of the world. The minds of England, France, America, and the Dominions were turned towards the unpretentious hall in Holborn. No more wonderful audience ever assembled in London. Politics, society, racing, the literary and the theatrical worlds were represented. Not since the march past in London of our victorious troops had High Holborn presented such a moving, animated scene.

Outside the Stadium policemen regulated the traffic with enormous skill and magnificent results. The tens of thousands who could not get into the hall waited patiently outside for items of news. The police had cleared the back streets leading to the Stadium, so that the boxers got in unobserved. Splendid arrangements also had been made by the police to prevent the crowd from interfering with the ticket-holders. Cordons of constables were drawn across the streets, and nobody was allowed to pass the human barriers. All danger of the doors being rushed was thus obviated, and the spectators entered as comfortably as though they were going to a theatre on an ordinary night.

It was shortly before nine o'clock, Curzon and Berry were in the final round of their contest, when the Prince of Wales arrived. His Royal Highness had returned only a few days before from a journey round the world. Mr. Arnold Bennett thus described the Prince in the *New Statesman*:

> "In came Mr. Cochran, the mysterious organiser, escorting the Prince of Wales, the Prince holding a cigar just in the manner of his grandfather, and Mr.

Cochran looking rather like one of the Antonines. Mr. Cochran gazed around at the vast advertisements of his own theatres, and at the cinema operators precariously suspended over balconies. Mr. Cochran had thoughtfully provided loops of rope for them to rest their feet in. Mr. Cochran had forgotten nothing. It was his hour. He deserved it. It pains me, as a professional observer, that I cannot recall whether the Prince and Mr. Cochran wore smoking-jackets or swallow-tails."

As the Prince took his seat there were welcoming cries of "Speech!" The Prince rose when silence had been secured. "I thank you," he said, "for your very warm welcome. I am glad to be in London again." Wing-Commander Louis Greig, who was in attendance on the Prince, presented Mr. Harry Preston to the Prince; also one of Joe Beckett's seconds, Arthur Guttridge. I gave up my seat next to the Prince, who wanted to talk to Mr. Preston on the best means of keeping fit. Both Beckett and Carpentier appeared rather nervous when I saw them in their dressing-rooms before they came into the ring. Carpentier naturally was worried about his arm, but Descamps and those around him were doing everything to keep their man in good spirits. The match was not mentioned; so much so that when a London police official came into Carpentier's room to give the usual warning the matter was turned into a joke. "It is my duty to tell you that you must take all consequences for the boxing match in which you are about to engage. You will have to answer for any accident which may occur. I have already cautioned your opponent," or something to this effect was what the official said.

"What is it he says?" asked Carpentier in French.

"This gentleman," explained M. Victor Breyer, the editor of the *Echo des Sports*, "is the High Commissioner of Police. He comes on behalf of the police of London to offer their greetings and their profound hope that you will win."

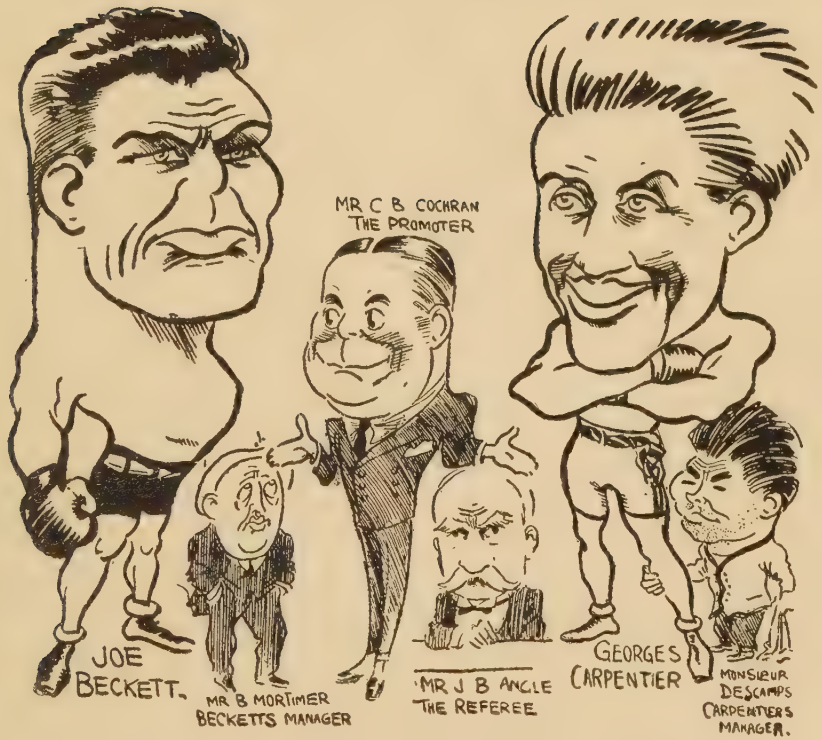
And, indeed, Georges Carpentier entered the ring believing that the London police were backing him to a man. As the boxers walked down to the ring, Descamps whispered to me, "*Deux* rounds! Georges sure!"

Carpentier first of all made a bow, worthy of the traditions of the Comédie Française, to the Prince of Wales; then he waved his hand to friends all round the hall, and threw kisses to a lady in a ring-side seat. The Prince wanted to know who the lady was, and I explained that her name was Nina Myral, and that she was a revue artist who had come to London with Carpentier's great friend and brother-airman, M. Louis Chatain. As soon as he put his foot in the ring, Carpentier appeared to be the embodiment of confidence; but I knew Beckett well enough to know that underneath that appearance of solid phlegm he was a mass of boiling nerves.

Arnold Bennett wrote that when the men came before the packed house of onlookers all the experts were certain that Beckett must win. "Some of them," he said, "murmured something perfunctory about a million to one chance of an early knock-out by Carpentier, but none of them in reality had any fear of such a chance. I surrendered, and told myself what a simpleton I had been to imagine for a single instant that Carpentier would not be smashed. Further, the experts killed Carpentier immediately they saw him. They said he was not in condition; they didn't like the colour of his skin; they said he had gone right off; they said he was a dead man."

Certain it was that when the men stripped in the ring odds were laid on Beckett. Quite rightly there was in the house a tremendous desire for a British victory, despite the enormous popularity of the Frenchman.

The actual fight was real drama. Carpentier, like a tiger, moved from his corner. The smile had gone, and in its place was the fighting face. Beckett advanced slowly. The two men were taking range, and at once Carpentier's left flickered on Beckett's nose. Joe brushed his nose with the back of his right glove, and grunted. Then he



CARICATURES FROM *DAILY MAIL*, BY TOM WEBSTER,
OF THE CARPENTIER-BECKETT FIGHT

made an attempt to be aggressive, and Carpentier retreated almost to the ropes. Beckett, hitting out with both hands, went for the body, and there came a clinch.

"Break" came from the referee. The men swung round. Beckett attempted an upper cut, but missed. Then came the end. Carpentier feinted with his left, and, like a lightning flash, smashed his right to the Englishman's unguarded chin.

Down went Beckett like a log—a British champion stricken by an elementary boxing trick. For a few second the spectators were stunned as completely almost as Beckett. Not a sound came from them. At the count of seven Beckett stirred and tried to crawl. Carpentier had already turned towards his corner; Descamps knew that the fight was over.

"Eight—nine—ten," and then the storm broke.

The dream of British heavy-weight supremacy had once again been shattered. Carpentier swept his seconds away, and carried the dazed Beckett to his corner. Supporters of the Frenchman climbed into the ring—hoisted him shoulder-high; women threw flowers at him; the Prince of Wales stepped up to the ropes and shook hands with him, saying, "Yours is a splendid victory. I heartily congratulate you."

> "Not long ago the French *élite*,
> Were given to boxing with their feet;
> But that quaint mode is done and dead—
> The Frenchman now wins on his *head*!"

This was T. W. H. Crosland's comment on the fight. The scene in the streets was indescribable. The crowd could hardly believe the news; they were astonished at the quick termination of the fight, in the first round—73 seconds. Nevertheless, after the first moment of disappointment there came generous cheers for the winner, and cheers even for the loser. Those leaving the Stadium were mobbed for news of how it happened. Beckett, as he left, was greeted with cries of "Good old Joe."

Carpentier, not only on this night, but during the whole of his stay in London, could not go anywhere without causing crowds to gather. There were compliments upon the arrangements made for the spectators. Said the *Morning Post*: "No account of this event of last night would be complete without some tribute to the arrangements for its decision. Everything from entrances to exits went as merrily as marriage bells."

Lord Northcliffe was anxious that his brother, Mr. St. John Harmsworth, should see the fight, but was afraid that it would be difficult in such a crowd because of his brother's unhappy, crippled condition. I arranged that Mr. Harmsworth should come to the Stadium before seven, and dine with me in my little office—and he saw the fight in complete comfort.

As soon as possible after the "knock-out" Carpentier made his way to Delysia's flat in Knightsbridge, where there was a merry assemblage, including Nina Myral, Yvonne Reynolds, and George Graves (then playing in *Maggie* at the Oxford), Marcel Lattes (the composer of *Maggie*), Charles Cuvillier (the composer of *Afgar*, in which Delysia was playing at the Pavilion), Seymour Hicks, and Herman Darewski.

Already I had Carpentier's agreement that in the event of beating Beckett he would meet Dempsey; but on the day after the match he signed a new contract definitely undertaking to meet Dempsey, under my promotion, for a sum of £20,000.

Then commenced the fight for the fight.

CHAPTER XXVII

A Sudden Illness that lost me a Fortune over the Dempsey-Carpentier Fight—American Writers realise I am a Genuine Bidder for the Promotion—Tex Rickard my only Rival—The Agitation against Dempsey—I double my Price for Carpentier; £20,000 to £40,000—The Scene at the Signing of the Articles—My "Roast-Beef Complexion"—My Illness begins with Pains in the Head—Specialists order me to drop Work immediately—W. A. Brady, my Representative in America, backs out of the Deal—Letters and Cables that were not shown to me—The Fairness of Tex Rickard—A £15,000 "Gate" for the Return Match between Wells and Beckett—Carpentier's Advice to Wells—Difficulties with Joe Beckett—His "Mental Agony"—Why I gave up Boxing Promotion—The Wilde-Herman Match "the Last Straw."

THE day after the Beckett-Carpentier bout, M. Descamps signed in my office a new contract agreeing for Carpentier to fight Dempsey for a definite sum—win, lose, or draw—of £20,000. Of this sum I volunteered to deposit £5000 at the *Sporting Life* offices on 31st December, and the balance at later dates. On 1st January the *Sporting Life* acknowledged the receipt of the first deposit according to contract.

As Descamps left my room at the Pavilion a telegram was handed to him from some French promoters. I am not sure of the exact amount they offered Carpentier, but in the event of his accepting they were prepared to offer Dempsey 150,000 dollars. The battle for the Big Fight had, indeed, begun.

I sailed on the *Mauretania* a few days later, and while I was on the Atlantic it was announced that Mr. James Coffroth had offered 400,000 dollars for a forty-five-round fight to take place in Mexico. I had previously offered Dempsey £40,000 and a ten weeks' music-hall engagement

at £1000 a week. Mr. William A. Brady, my representative in America, had wired me that Jack Kearns, Dempsey's manager, would do nothing until he had seen me.

No sooner had Descamps returned to Paris than he was reported as saying that he had no contract with me. This report Descamps afterwards strictly denied.

Soon after I arrived in New York the papers announced that an offer for the fight of 550,000 dollars—75 per cent. to the winner and 25 per cent. to the loser—had been made by Mr. William Fox of the Fox Films ; also while I was in New York a statement, without foundation, was published that I had concluded negotiations for the fight to be held in the State of New Jersey. A correspondent of the *London Times* interviewed me, and my official statement appeared in the *Times* on 13th January as follows :

> "I do not think the match will be held in New Jersey. It is true that I have been approached by an American promoter to co-operate with him in holding the bout in that State, but the position is that, if it were held there, it would be limited to eight rounds under the laws of the State, whereas in England the bout would go twenty rounds. I think a twenty-round match in England would draw more money than eight rounds in New Jersey, and I am prepared to give Dempsey more money to box in England than there. I am still negotiating with Dempsey, and have no announcement to make at present.
>
> "With regard to rumours that Dempsey and Carpentier are being signed up for a forty-five-round bout by Mr. Coffroth, I have received a cable from Carpentier's manager to say that he holds himself at my disposition, and awaits my decision. Moreover, he says he has received no serious offer except mine. My contract with Descamps, by the way, is to box in England ; but he has given his consent to bring Carpentier over here should the match be staged in New Jersey."

I did not doubt that this fight, if brought off in London, would draw a minimum gate of £100,000.

Before long I heard of offers from Dominick Tortorich of New Orleans, and Colonel Miller, the owner of a travelling wild-west show, known as 101 Ranch. But it was obvious to me, this time, that most of the bids were not genuine. All sorts of offers were being put forward to make me raise my "ante," so to speak. For instance, the American papers reported that the Baron Henri de Rothschild was sailing to New York as representative of a syndicate headed by himself, the Duc de Cazes, and Prince Murat, and that he meant to outbid me. At the beginning of the New Year, while I was still in New York, Mr. Kearns stated that the following offers had been made to him:

D. J. Tortorich, New Orleans, 200,000 dollars for Dempsey's end.

Colonel Miller of Oklahoma, 300,000-dollar purse.

Otto Floto, Kansas City, 200,000-dollar purse.

Vienne, Paris, 250,000 dollars to Dempsey for match in France.

Jack Curley, 150,000-dollar purse.

Decoin, 250,000 dollars to Dempsey for match in Paris.

Prince Murat and Duc de Cazes offer to outbid any promoter for match in Europe.

Portland, Oregon, 100,000-dollar purse.

Booker and Mitchell, 250,000 dollars to Dempsey for fight either in England or France.

Billy Gibson, 250,000 dollars to Dempsey for fight in America.

Fritz Mente, Bridgeport, Conn., 100,000 dollars to Dempsey.

James W. Coffroth, 400,000-dollar purse for forty-five-round bout at Tijuana, Mexico.

Morris Penter, Pueblo, 250,000 dollars to Dempsey for fight at Pueblo.

William R. Parson, New York City, 150,000 dollars and one-third of profits to Dempsey for fight in London.
Ben Stein for fight in Paris.
Charles B. Cochran, London, 350,000-dollar purse.

The validity of my contract with Carpentier was questioned by the New York reporters; but it was, in fact, cast iron, although of course there could be no fight were I not successful in getting Dempsey's signature also. Let me say that I had in my mind a definite limit as to the sum I would bid for the match, and before I sailed from England I had underwritten the purse for an amount not exceeding 300,000 dollars, and I was prepared to deposit a substantial part of this whenever I could get Dempsey's signature. I had, in fact, to my credit at a New York bank 200,000 dollars the day I landed, and, although some of the local newspapers were plugging hard for local promoters, I was not in New York long before the sporting writers realised that I was a genuine bidder. Bob Edgren, a well-respected writer on boxing, stated in an article which appeared throughout the country: "The great London promoter will be good for any sum he names. He has backed many ventures which were failures financially, because of conditions over which he had no control, and has paid the deficits without a murmur." Bill Wathey, in the *New York Telegram*, was another writer who helped to win for me the confidence of the American press and people. He described me as "quiet and unostentatious, with a well-modulated gentle voice, and a most approachable manner." He went on to say that I was "about the best listener, while at the same time astonishingly convincing in his talk, that he had met in years." He gave me credit for absorbing every detail of a subject in which I was interested, and concluded by saying, "It is hard to probe Cochran to the bottom; but he stands up well under a fire of questions, and impresses with his ability even to handle a heavyweight fight situation." My enterprises have ofttimes brought me into the limelight of publicity, but this was

the first time, I think, that my appearance and manner were considered worthy of description to the extent of columns in hundreds of papers all over the United States. The famous writer, Thomas S. Rice of the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle,* described me as having " the shoulders of a light heavy-weight, and the springy step of a highly trained athlete in perfect condition." My eyes, he said, were " a sort of cross—in colour—between brown and blue. It must be an excellent combination, for there has never been a time when he could not see a good thing."

The Americans seemed to be enormously impressed that George Bernard Shaw had written a description of the Carpentier-Beckett fight in a weekly paper, and, looking through my scrap-books of that time, it seems to me that the American press had more confidence that I should land the fight than some of the English papers. The Americans knew that my money was in a New York bank, and they were aware of the worth of most of the offers of millions which cropped up daily. Many of these offers were treated quite seriously in England.

Meanwhile, Mr. Tex Rickard had not appeared on the scene; but I had inside information that he had a private arrangement with Jack Kearns, Dempsey's manager, and I regarded him as my only rival.

I believed the position to be, as ultimately it turned out, that I had Carpentier signed up and Rickard had Dempsey. Unless we came together there could be no fight. Rickard was keeping in the background because he hoped either that my contract with Carpentier had a time limit, or that I should give up the pursuit.

My friend, Mr. James B. Regan, had fixed me up in a beautiful suite at his Knickerbocker Hotel, which, alas, is no more. As one who has stayed in many hotels, I say unhesitatingly that it was the best-run hotel I ever came across.

I was accompanied on this trip by my wife and Major Walter Creighton. But for Major Creighton I don't think I should have survived. My telephone never stopped

ringing. There was always a crowd waiting to buttonhole me in the lobby of the hotel. Everybody with any sort of a scheme seemed to think I was the man to be separated from my money to finance it. I was offered oil fields, hotels, prairie land, automobile factories, everything from a multi-million dollar scheme to a baker's shop on Avenue A. And every newspaper in the United States wanted a new story every morning and every evening.

Before I left New York it was reported that Rickard had cabled Descamps an offer. He was said to have stated that he had an amicable agreement with Dempsey and his manager, Jack Kearns. He had tried, he said, to keep matters as quiet as possible, because he did not want the Albany legislators, until after the boxing question had come up for a vote, to get wind of the fact that he contemplated staging the biggest fistic bout of the age. He knew well that there might be State-wide opposition to the holding of such a spectacular contest in New York or New Jersey.

I met Mr. Rickard two or three times in New York, and we had some friendly chats in my rooms. We were both rather non-committal, although Rickard did tell me that at the moment he was not anxious to get the fight. An agitation had been raised against Dempsey, and it was gaining ground. It was alleged that he had been a "slacker" during the war. Moreover, the authorities in various States were protesting against the big match being held.

This did not affect me, as my main idea was to get the match for England; but Dempsey, all through, wanted the fight in the United States.

Otto Floto, who had made an offer for the fight, speaking of me, said, "His chances are exceptionally the best, because he was shrewd enough to sign up Carpentier before sailing for this country. Cochran has a great lead on the opposition to start with, and when this fact is driven home to the Dempsey crowd, it will make a difference in the final proceedings." Jack M'Auliffe, the old light-

weight champion, summed the situation up as follows: "Cochran's offer is the only one, so far, that cannot be called 'bull.' He has the capital to promote the fight, the confidence of the British public, and, most important, a contract with Carpentier. Coffroth's offer is pure 'bull,' and Mr. Fox is looking for publicity. The American Legion won't stand for Jack Dempsey getting a big part of 1,000,000 dollars for a fight in this country. Wherever I have gone I have heard remarks about Dempsey because he didn't join the colours."

A good many writers were now beginning to take the view that the bout must take place in Europe, although there were some who believed that Tex Rickard held the key to the situation, and was waiting for my contract with Carpentier to expire.

I left New York on the *Baltic* at the end of January, with nothing settled. I had satisfied myself, however, that my only serious opponent was Tex Rickard, who had least to say; I had got a pretty fair estimate of the exact position.

Dempsey wanted 300,000 dollars, and Rickard would give it to him. Rickard was also prepared to give 200,000 dollars to Carpentier, and although I had Descamps' signature for £20,000, I knew human nature well enough to know that I would never get Carpentier into the ring until I gave him as good as he could get elsewhere. Descamps I knew as a very shrewd man, and he was not paying much attention to the majority of offers spoken of in the press. He, like Dempsey, knew that the only genuine bidders were Rickard and myself. Kearns was always stating that he was considering a fresh offer from some Mexican oil king or some Parsee prince—but that was only to ginger me up.

When, in March 1920, it was announced that Carpentier was about to leave for America, I flew to Paris and fixed up a new contract with Descamps. I doubled my price for Carpentier, making it £40,000 instead of £20,000.

My position was strengthened in other ways. Carpentier

not only undertook to meet Dempsey under my promotion, but he agreed that he would not fight Dempsey anywhere but in Europe except with my consent, and that he would do everything in his power to induce Dempsey to sign with me. He put up a forfeit of £1000, and I increased my £5000 deposit to £15,000.

When they reached America, Descamps and Carpentier were bombarded with offers from promoters, and the press endeavoured to force Descamps into making a match. But he stuck fast to his contract with me, asserting that he was unable to enter into a contract with any other promoter.

In September 1920 I went to America again and saw Carpentier win his match with "Battling Levinsky," and after the match I approached Tex Rickard, who realised my position in regard to Carpentier as much as I realised his in regard to Dempsey. Each of us held a half of the whole. Neither half was of any value without the other.

After very short negotiations, Rickard agreed to promote the match in conjunction with William A. Brady and myself, each of us to have a third interest. I declared Brady "in" at his request, as he had done a lot of spade work with Dempsey, which, unfortunately, had not been fruitful. We three met Kearns and Descamps at Brady's offices on two or three occasions, and, with the assistance of two New York lawyers, articles were drafted and ultimately signed on Friday, 5th November, at the Hotel Claridge.

> The articles called for the match to take place at the time and place to be announced by the promoters, sixty days before the bout, which was to be between 1st March 1921 and 4th July 1921. Dempsey was to receive 300,000 dollars, and Carpentier 200,000 dollars.
>
> The contest was to be not less than ten and not more than fifteen rounds.
>
> On or before 20th November—that was two weeks

from the date of signing—the promoters between them were to post 100,000 dollars, and the contestants 50,000 dollars each.

A corporation was to be formed to control the moving pictures, of which 50 per cent. of the stock was to go to the promoters and 25 per cent. to each of the fighters.

A referee was to be chosen from the following: Bill Brown, Otto Floto, J. F. Dougherty, James J. Corbett, and James J. Jeffries. Mr. Bob Edgren was to be sole arbiter in case of any non-agreement as to the referee or any other matter.

The deposits were to be lodged with the Central Union Trust Company of New York immediately after the meeting. My deposit of one-third of 100,000 dollars, at the rate of exchange at the time, amounted to £9564.

Mr. W. O. M'Geechan, describing the ceremony of the public signing at the Hotel Claridge, wrote: "François Descamps and Jack Kearns exchanged perfume bottles after the fashion of gents of the elder and uncauliflowered age exchanging snuff-boxes. The room was lighted by a soft red glow given out by the roast-beef complexion of the English promoter, Charles Cochran. Tex Rickard, who has become bald in the fight-promotion game, stroked his few remaining hairs lovingly. William A. Brady came late, and was almost out of the picture. Jack and George shook hands fervently and affectionately as they separated. 'I hope nothing happens to the poor fellow until I get him in the ring,' said Dempsey."

Before I left America Tex Rickard made me promise that I would come over for the fight, and do my share of the work. I had a wonderful send-off, when I sailed on 16th November, and it was a wonderful day for me, for after nearly two years of effort I had been instrumental, with the hearty co-operation of Tex Rickard, in signing up the contestants for the fight in which the whole world was

interested. James P. Sinnot wrote in the *Evening Mail* on the day of my departure :

"TO CHARLES B. COCHRAN

"Charlie, old dear, here's a jolly old cheer,
A sort of a send-off and what not ;
To wish you *bon voyage* and that sort of thing—
I hope you don't think we're a rum lot.

We didn't think much of the Carpentier stuff,
The contract you flourished and all that ;
But since you've come over we've found you're no bluff,
There's more than your hair 'neath your hat.

Charlie, old dear, au revoir, not good-bye ;
May the country become democratic,
If we don't wish you well 'midst the rock and the rye,
As you sail on the old *Adriatic*.

Come again, stay awhile, teamed with Brady and Tex,
Stage all the fights that you please ;
But don't bring Joe Beckett unless you would vex
Us, we've quite lost our liking for cheese ! "

It did, indeed, look now as if I could regard contentedly and philosophically the hardships and the wearing disappointments of the greater part of my life since I had begun to earn my living. There were the foundations of a solid fortune in this fight. My ship did at last seem to be coming home. And then suddenly something happened.

Before I left for America I began to have pains in my head. On the boat they became a little worse, and I sent for the ship's doctor. He said I was over-tired. In New York another doctor told me pretty much the same thing. On the *Adriatic*, coming back, the pains became worse, and I rested a good deal in my cabin.

When I reached London I had to set to work at once with the rehearsals of the new revue, the *League of Notions*, with which I was going to reopen the New Oxford Theatre, after its reconstruction. Again those headaches. They got so bad that I mentioned them to Sir Alfred Fripp. He told me to go to bed immediately, and he sent a specialist, who subjected me to a very thorough examination—including

a puncture in the spine. I was kept in bed some days. Then I was told that my mind must have complete rest. I was to give up all thought of business for several months.

Such drastic orders could not have come at a worse time. My wife called in two other doctors. They sealed my doom. They said the specialist's advice must be followed without a day's delay. I gave a power of attorney to Mr. Clive R. McKee, so far as my English affairs were concerned, and to William A. Brady as regards the fight in America.

For over two months I was in bed, and was not allowed to attend to business, to see letters, cables, or newspapers.

It was during this time that the American newspapers became full of protests against the fight. The attack on Dempsey was renewed. A local political situation sprang up which made it seem that the fight would be prohibited in New York or in New Jersey.

The *New York Times* interviewed an official of the Central Trust Union Company, who disclosed the fact that mine was the only deposit that had been made under the terms of the articles signed at Hotel Claridge.

William A. Brady got alarmed. He declared that he wanted to see the boxers' money up before he deposited his share. Tex Rickard said he was ready to put up his money directly Brady's went up. Descamps said he had deposited his money with a Paris bank, but Government restrictions would not allow the money to be sent out of France. Jack Kearns said he had sent a surety bond for 50,000 dollars to Dan M'Ketrick, with instructions to deposit it as per the terms of the articles. M'Ketrick, as a reporter put it, had placed the bond in his safe, and had lost the key.

So Brady declared that he would withdraw from the venture, and remove my deposit also.

By every mail Brady wrote me long letters urging me to get out of my undertaking before it was too late, letters that I was not allowed to see, on which I could give no judgment.

He had, he said, information from influential political personages which made him certain that the fight would

not be allowed to take place in the United States. He wrote me in January :

" *The fight is impossible here.* Any one who tries it will meet with disaster. Canada has already said it cannot take place there. I know it cannot take place in New York or Jersey—*so I acted.* I hope you will realise I have done right. If you don't now, you will soon. It now leaves the fight open to London at your own figure.

" *Dempsey and Kearns are broke.* The Willard match is off. They can go nowhere but Europe, and at a price where you or we can make some money. *I am sure I am right.* A cable to-night says you will offer £100,000 for the fight. *Don't.* You will get it for less than half of that. *I know.*

" If there is any crisis about all this, I will stand it all and keep you clear. The meeting of boxing commissioners from all parts of the U.S. have decided nothing over 15 dollars a seat in any part of the U.S. That kills it."

Later on Brady wrote me :

" As I have written you many times in the last six or eight weeks, there is absolutely no chance of this bout being allowed to take place in the United States or Canada so long as the purse offered to the fighters is as much as it is at present.

" I feel quite convinced that anybody who attempts to bring this bout off in the United States or in Canada, and pays 500,000 dollars, will lose somewhere in the neighbourhood of 300,000 dollars on the venture. Times are bad here, with little prospect of their getting better in the near future.

" No matter what Tex Rickard thinks or says, I know that Mr. Miller, Governor of New York State, will not permit the Carpentier-Dempsey fight to take place in this State. There is a rabid lobby of ministers

and religious fanatics working in Albany to pass all kinds of blue laws against baseball, the movies, and boxing, and their principal argument is the Carpentier-Dempsey match and the purse that is being offered.

"Seeing all these dangers accumulating, and when the *New York Times* printed the story of the fact concerning the deposits, I immediately took advantage of it and declared that, under the circumstances, Cochran and Brady were out."

These letters I did not see. They arrived at the worst period of my illness. My wife showed them to my closest friends and business associates. They warned her that there might be grave consequences to my health were she to discuss the position with me. They advised her to be guided by Brady.

On 21st January Tex Rickard cabled to me: "Brady has declared himself out, also declared you out. Cable me immediately your attitude."

My wife sent a cable to Rickard in my name, referring him to Brady. Rickard was most fair to me and my interests all through, before he would accept Brady's withdrawal on my behalf. He induced his financial partner, John Ringling, the proprietor of the Barnum and Ringling Brothers Circus, to call on me in London.

Mr. Ringling came to my house at Aldford Street, and was not allowed to see me. My poor wife was distracted; but she was acting, as she thought, in my best interests. Her main idea was to save my life.

Ultimately my deposit was withdrawn, and the match took place in Jersey under the auspices of Rickard and Ringling, and was governed by the articles which I was instrumental in having prepared. The only difference in the original arrangements was that Rickard, who, primarily, had a one-third share, split the whole of the profit with Ringling when Brady and myself withdrew.

It was a long time afterwards, when I was recuperating in Spain, that I saw all the correspondence and the cables.

Brady acted in what he believed my best interests. Rickard also did his best to protect me, and John Ringling too, so I have no kick. But, had I been well, and in control of my affairs, nothing would have caused me to withdraw from the venture. I should have been satisfied to leave my money on deposit.

When my deposit was returned, the rate of exchange had changed to such an extent that I lost £1150.

Altogether I suppose I was more than £5000 out of pocket, apart from the loss of time, my lost work, and my share of the profits. It was hard lines, as the Carpentier and Dempsey fight was the culminating stage of the situation which I had built up by my eliminating contests, which decided whether Beckett, Wells, or Goddard should meet Carpentier.

In July, the year after Dempsey beat Carpentier in Jersey, William A. Brady came to England and paid me a visit at Worthing, where I had rented Edward Knoblock's beautiful house for the summer.

It was the first time I had seen Brady since my bitter disappointment, and during the whole day we were together we never referred to the fight. He told Mr. Walter Wanger, the cinema producer, that he was tremendously touched by my not having expressed some disappointment. I have a letter from him dated 18th July, from the Savoy Hotel, in which he says, " I am hoping that sometime before I die I shall make for you in U.S. with a play, what I lost for you over the fight."

I must now go back a little.

When I went to America at the end of 1919 I gave Major Wilson a free hand to arrange programmes for the Holborn Stadium. A number of interesting evenings were held, and, in most instances, they were profitable. When I returned I got busy with the big men again. On 4th March 1920 a twenty-round contest between Frank Goddard and Eddie M'Goorty, both of whom had previously suffered defeat from Joe Becket, went thirteen rounds before M'Goorty was floored with a left hook to the jaw, and to

save the American further punishment the referee stopped the contest. That match drew £2253, 18s. Johnny Bee of Birkenhead stood up to "Kid" Lewis for four rounds: receipts £1277, 1s., and I paid Lewis £500, and Bee £150. On 5th April Frank Moran beat Tom Cowler on points; but it was not a very interesting affair, and drew only £408. But three days later Bombardier Wells and Eddie M'Goorty brought a "gate" of £2505. The Bombardier knocked out M'Goorty in the sixteenth round; there were critics who said it was the best thing Wells had done in the boxing ring, and a return match with Beckett began to be discussed. Wells surprised the crowd by appearing calm when in his corner, and for the greater part of the fight was free from the nervousness that so often had brought about his defeat. M'Goorty, who was within one month of being the same age as Wells, was in splendid condition—better than I had ever seen him, and he brought all his knowledge of ring-craft to bear on the fighting. He put up a far better fight against Wells than he did against Beckett.

On 15th May 1919 I staged my last match at Olympia. It was the return between Beckett and Wells, which I had led up to by the series of matches I had arranged for Wells since his previous defeat by the Southampton man. Who would have said it would be possible to draw nearly £15,000 for such a match, little more than a year after Beckett had so soundly beaten the Bombardier at the Stadium! But such was the magnetic quality of Wells!

The interest in this return match was greater than in the first encounter. The wish was father to the thought that Wells might win. Carpentier added to the interest by leaving £100, before he went to America, for me to put on Wells. He had also said, "Tell Billy to remember what I told him, and he will win." There was much speculation as to what the Frenchman had told the Bombardier.

Olympia was packed that night. It was one of the biggest crowds that ever has assembled there for a glove fight. It didn't matter that Wells had so frequently

disappointed his public. When he entered the ring he was greeted like an undefeated champion on the top wave of his popularity. And, as was so customary with him, there were flashes of brilliance — and then defeat. Beckett gave him plenty of opportunities to win, and it was his own fault that he allowed himself to be weakened and beaten by a man vastly his inferior in the science of boxing. Beckett should have credit for his victory; but it was generally held that he was just "the best of a bad lot." As the special correspondent of the *Times* said, it was "a sad reflection that a man with so little idea of boxing, with so poor a defence, so inept a power of hitting, should be champion of this country. It is enough to make Mace and Belcher turn in their graves."

The Bombardier boxed magnificently in the first round; but Beckett seemed impervious to such punishment as he received. In the second round, Beckett caught Wells unbalanced and sent him to the floor. On rising, Wells got in a right, but without any apparent effect. Next round Beckett rushed in and received a straight left to the mouth. This seemed to sting him to more determination. Soon he and the Bombardier mixed in a terrific rally. Blows were taken and received without flinching. Then it was seen that Wells was suffering. Beckett returned to the fray with renewed fury, and Wells could not ward him off. A left and right to Wells' chin caused him to drop his guard. Then over came Beckett's right straight and hard to the point. Wells turned half round and then dropped, a long strip of a man, flat on his back. It was grimly fascinating to watch his hard breathing as he was counted out.

The following week at the Stadium I brought together Frank Goddard and Frank Moran, and the American beat the big Englishman in the second round after the latter had taken two counts of nine seconds. Joe Beckett, who had signed with me to meet Willie Meehan, Bob Devere, Frank Moran, or any other person I chose, save Dempsey or Carpentier, saw the match, and obviously was impressed by Moran's victory.

I notified him on 13th May that his next opponent would be Frank Moran at the Stadium on 14th June ; but on 22nd May, the day after Moran beat Goddard, I received word from Beckett that his hand was bad, and that he would not be fit to enter the ring for some weeks. So Moran, having no other engagement, left for America. Almost directly Moran was on the boat Beckett signed with another promoter to meet Tommy Burns. Naturally I protested. But I was powerless, as Beckett's hand had refrained from getting well until Moran was out of the way !

On 28th July I went to Southampton, and entered into a new contract under which Beckett agreed to box Moran on 24th September for the original purse of £2000, plus £250 for training expenses. A little later—just after the Burns match—Beckett again notified me that he was unable to meet Moran. Again an injury to his hand was offered as an excuse. By this time I was pretty well fed up. Beckett's explanation to the Press was of such a character it surprised me—and I have never ceased to be surprised since—that the entire army of writers on boxing should not have made it impossible for him to box again unless he carried out his honourable obligations. He justified his action by stating that he considered the £2000, plus £250 for training expenses, not sufficient. Already, if payment were based on boxing ability, I had overpaid him from the start. In this case his effrontery passed all bounds. I had begun by offering him £5000 for two matches—£2000 for the fight with Billy Wells, and £3000 for a second match. After consideration, he came to my office and agreed to take my offer, providing he got £3000 for the first match, and £2000 for the second. So a contract was signed under which he agreed to meet Bombardier Wells, in May 1920, for the sum of £3000, win, lose, or draw. And the contract went on to say, " Joe Beckett also agrees to box Willie Meehan, Bob Devere, Frank Moran, Frank Goddard, or any opponent selected by Mr. Cochran, bar Carpentier or Dempsey, for £2000, win, lose, or draw." Now, though Beckett had stipulated

that instead of getting £2000 for the first match, and £3000 for the second, the payments to him should be reversed; he talked of it as a grievance that he should receive less to meet Moran than to meet Wells. As the editor of *Boxing* pointed out, I had been Beckett's best friend. Until I brought him from obscurity, he rarely or ever received a larger sum than £100.

Joe, although legally and otherwise indisputably the champion of Great Britain, lacked a Belt. He had won three battles under my promotion, one of these over an American, and I presented him with a Championship Belt as his permanent property. As the editor of *Boxing* said:

> "There is really no reason why Mr. Cochran should have done this. The only person who could possibly gain advertisement thereby is Joe Beckett himself and, in the circumstances, the presentation can only be looked upon as a free gift. Was this one of the ways in which Beckett considers that he has not been treated in a fair and just way?
>
> "Meanwhile, the Carpentier disaster has taken place, and here it may be that Beckett is able to place his finger on an unjust or unfair piece of treatment. It is true that quite a number of press men refused to listen to any suggestion that Joseph was due to meet trouble; but the fact remains that he met a whole lot of it. Does he accuse Mr. Cochran of having prepared it for him? We have always understood that Joe was very handsomely paid for his very brief appearance in the ring on that occasion; but it may be that he feels that Mr. Cochran should have refused to expose him to the risks he had to run."

Beckett complained that he had suffered "mental agony." The editor of *Boxing* assumed this to be due to the fact that, after Beckett's hands had given way twice, he finally consented to a date upon which he would meet Moran. Moran was cabled for and promised to sail immediately.

"Whereupon," *Boxing* goes on, "Beckett presumably sat down to survey the full history of his association with Mr. Cochran.

"As he ran this over mentally in the intervals of the agony, which is to be feared obscured that clearness of vision a man of such colossal financial genius would normally possess, he noticed a long and terrible record of injustices and unfairness. Suffering, as he has informed us, under those manifold slights and indignities, Joe decided that he must really demand a further thousand pounds as a salve for his injuries, only to receive the unkindest out of all—a flat refusal to concede the amount."

Beckett stated in the Press that, for some extraordinary reason, there had been in certain quarters a strong desire to see him beaten. Whenever he entered the ring he said he suffered mental agony from knowing that a large number of spectators had paid at the box office chiefly because they hoped to witness his defeat. Said *Boxing*: "Why on earth did not Mr. Cochran refuse admission to every one who could not make an affidavit that he was a thick-and-thin Beckett supporter?"

From the beginning of his career Beckett had shown himself devoid of any sense of responsibility towards those who were befriending him.

He sought relief from his contract with Mr. Bernard Mortimer (to whom he owed the position that enabled him to get the match with Wells) on the ground that he could not read, and did not understand what he was signing. This, notwithstanding that the contract had been thoroughly explained to him in the presence of Mr. Bettinson. Mr. Mortimer had paid all expenses, and had derived no benefit from the contract right up to the time when Beckett met Wells. It was only when big money appeared to be in sight, and Mr. Mortimer had a chance of getting back some of his outlay, that Beckett complained of the injustice of his contract.

In every match I promoted for him he invariably, after the contracts were fixed up, made quibbles, and this notwithstanding that, on occasions when I had done well out of a match, I made him presents. His contemptuous allusions to his opponents, often made public, no doubt helped also to prevent him from gaining popularity. Nevertheless, no man could have had a more encouraging reception when he entered the ring to meet Carpentier, and no loser ever had more sympathetic treatment. When he beat Wells the second time the ovation he received was a memorable one. Even after his treatment of me in regard to Moran he had many sympathisers. But he lost, I think, his last friend by his disgraceful exhibition at Olympia when he faced Carpentier for the second time. Beckett's financial rewards during his career were out of all proportion to his ability.

Let me leave Beckett however. I had arranged a big card for the reopening of the Stadium on 17th September, Pete Herman having accepted my offer to meet Jimmy Wilde for the World's Bantam Championship. Later, at the request of Herman's manager, I postponed the match until 27th September. A great number of seats had been sold ; but I announced that they would be good for the later date. I booked and paid for passages for Herman, his manager, trainer, and sparring partner, on the *Kaiserin Augusta Victoria*, and also for their return passages a few days after the match. Then, almost on the date of sailing, Herman's manager cabled me that he could not leave America. The fact was he had used his engagement with me as a lever to get a bigger price in America for other matches, and he thought he could save the Wilde match until such time as it suited him. My loss did not trouble him at all. I had to return over £12,000 worth of seats booked in advance.

I felt so disgusted over the whole affair that I determined to retire forthwith from boxing promotion, except for my contract with Carpentier to meet Dempsey.

The Herman-Wilde affair was the last straw. In my

theatrical career I had never broken faith with the public. If I promised them a show they got the best I could give them. But, as a promoter of professional boxing, I had been compelled, purely by the conduct of the boxers, continually to postpone matches, or cry them off. No boxer ever gave as his reason that he had " cold feet," or that by side-stepping a match with an opponent, who looked better than he thought he was when he signed, he might lose the opportunity of some easy money to follow. The worst offenders had been Beckett, M'Goorty, and, finally, Herman.

My retirement was in no way due to financial losses. Although I had been unable to make the Stadium pay with weekly matches, I had never lost money on a big fight at Olympia or with " star " contests at the Stadium.

Some of the daily papers devoted leading articles to my retirement. In the main they seemed to think that my retirement was a loss, although a few blamed me for the big purses. I can only say that I made my big matches after the utmost thought. Many of the boxers I signed up for a series of matches under terms which were small at the start, but increased as they brought off victories.

I had to face much opposition. Directly I began negotiations with a boxer of drawing power, he would receive other offers. I let many a match go to another promoter when the price was run up beyond what I thought it would bring back in " gate " money. Some of my opponents were not in a position to carry out the arrangements they were eager to make ; but that did not weigh much with the boxers. As Mr. Bat Masterson once said, " The average professional boxer has a brain which does not make more than one revolution every twenty-four hours." An offer was an offer, no matter what was behind it, to the majority of the men I was dealing with.

I never promoted a boxing match unless I could pay the purse, whatever the gate might be. The boxers knew that they would get their money in full the day after the match.

CHAPTER XXVIII

How Good Times began to slip away from me—*London, Paris, and New York*, and Nelson Keys—Keys not an Inventive Comedian—June and Dorothy Dickson—Nellie Taylor's Breakdown—Both *London, Paris, and New York* and the expensive *League of Notions* affected by my Illness—"Bunch" Keys and the Shirts—His £700 Bill for Clothes and Accessories—The Meeting between Sir Thomas Lipton and Sir Charles Allom—Postponement of the *League of Notions* that cost me £400 a Day—How the Dolly Sisters forced a Crisis—All my own Money in the Production, and the Doctors forbid me to attend to Business—I heard the First Night's Performance by Telephone—Ellaline Terriss speaks for me from the Stage—The Devoted Work of the Dolly Sisters.

I COME now to further tales of trouble, disappointment, and ill-luck, to those stages of my career which have ended in my being a poor man.

On 4th September 1920 I produced at the London Pavilion *London, Paris, and New York*, a revue by Arthur Wimperis, with music by Herman Darewski. Wimperis and I had spent a good deal of time together during the summer preparing this revue, which was meant mainly to present Nelson Keys.

When a revue is in preparation I invariably bombard my authors with suggestions, because a revue has first to be built, and then written. In any successful revue many scenes and interludes, upon which considerable time has been spent, are sacrificed before the first performance. Often ideas that seem good at birth do not mature well. For this reason revues put together hurriedly, with little time for substitution and rewriting, often fail. My experience has been that I have seldom failed with a revue if there has been plenty of time for preparation. In *London, Paris, and New York* I sent Mr. Wimperis a preliminary lay-out,

which hardly varied with what was submitted at the first performance. It was an exceptional case. Wimperis did splendid work; scenes and lyrics sparkled with wit. Nelson Keys was fitted like a glove—he has never been better provided for. Keys is not an inventive comedian. He is a most admirable caricaturist when provided with good material. But he must be written for. I do not recall one idea introduced by Keys himself into *London, Paris, and New York.*

I do not remember more pleasant rehearsals. Keys was inclined, perhaps, to want to do the thing for which he was not best adapted—he preferred to be a young Joe Coyne or a Maurice; but he would always listen to argument. When he went into management on his own account, with the great advantage of Wimperis as an author, and was able to select his own material, the fault of the revue was found to be lack of good comedy scenes.

London, Paris, and New York was my first big production at the Pavilion without Delysia, and I found her difficult to replace. I engaged an American comedienne, Georgia O'Ramey; but, except for her opening knockabout number, which was a "riot" on the first night, she did not have a startling success.

Hugh Wakefield, just out of the army, returned to the stage in this production, and was excellent in a number of parts and as a sort of *compère* when needed. June, who had not done much since her childhood days, came to me as a dancer, and was exquisite in a little pantomime ballet with Robert Quinault and Iris Rowe. In a later edition of the revue I gave June her first opportunity of opening her mouth on the stage. It was in a little duet with Keys. She was sweet. Iris Rowe studied hard with Quinault—an admirable master—and they have since blossomed out as a highly paid act, which for two years was a feature of the Ziegfeld Follies, and a success at the fashionable French watering-places.

Dancing was, indeed, a strong feature of this revue, as I had Maurice and Leonora Hughes (their first appear-

ance on a stage together), the superb Spanish dancer, Laura Santelmo, and the admirable Saragossa dancers, the Gomez trio. I had engaged Maurice by cable some time previously. Ida Adams was to have been his partner—Maurice had just dissolved partnership (professional and domestic) with his wife, Florence Walton. But Miss Adams, after rehearsing, decided not to go on, and when I arrived in New York on Christmas Day, 1919, Maurice was without a partner. I told him I would engage him if he could get a partner of whom I approved, and a little later he gave me a trial show at the Biltmore with Miss Leonora Hughes. I engaged them for *London, Paris, and New York*, and undertook to find a dancing-room for them in London ; and they made their début at the Piccadilly Hotel, in the room downstairs where the cabaret is now so successfully run. They did very well in the revue and later, when they left me to fulfil other engagements, I replaced them with Dorothy Dickson and Carl Hyson, who made their first appearance in London under my management. Then, hearing that *Sally* was to be produced by Messrs. Grossmith and Malone, Miss Dickson made a bold bid for the chief part, and got it. I am happy to have been the means, indirectly, of introducing to the musical comedy stage one of its daintiest leading ladies. Dorothy Dickson may not be the greatest actress in the world, but she is charming to look at, and, as a dancer, is as light as thistledown.

We had a funny experience upon the arrival of Laura Santelmo at the dress rehearsal. She had travelled direct from Spain, and was tired out. She could not speak a word of English. We were about to rehearse the Spanish scene in which she was to appear, and I was anxious for her to go through her dances so that we could time them and, more especially, arrange movements for the chorus-girls while Santelmo was changing her costumes. It was necessary for me to know the exact time she would take to change. I tried to make known my wants to her. It was hopeless. We telephoned to one or two hotels for an interpreter. No success. Then the stage manager told me

that an interpreter was coming from the Spanish Club. He arrived. " You speak Spanish ? " I said. He nodded, and I told him what I wished him to explain to the Señorita. He stood dumb.

" Why don't you tell her ? " I said.

" No comprenda Eenglees," was the reply.

Then somebody said that Maurice's acccompanist spoke Spanish, and he was sent for. I told him what I wanted —which was quite a mouthful—and he communicated it to her in two words—without effect.

" Tell her exactly what I said," I implored.

" I cannot," he said. " I only know one or two words."

The scene was set, the girls were dressed, the band was waiting, rehearsal money was burning up. Finally, an old gentleman arose from the orchestra pit.

" Do you want somebody who speaks Spanish ? " he said.

" Of course ! " I answered desperately. " Do you ? "

" Yes," he replied. " I am Spanish."

I asked the old gentleman to let Santelmo know that I wanted her to dress, walk through her dances, and make her changes, so that we could time them. I begged her not to worry how the music was played, as we would rehearse that properly next day. She was tired and obstinate, and we got no further. I was getting annoyed. I found that that made her more sulky. I had an inspiration. " Tell her," I said, " that she has the most beautiful eyes in the world."

The old gentleman hesitated. He started, I felt, to tell her all over again what we had been saying before. I stopped him, and begged him to say exactly what I had told him. At last he did so, falteringly. Santelmo smiled.

" Now say I think she is a most delightful person."

He did so, and Santelmo became entirely human.

I found, when I spent a holiday later in Seville, that a smile would win almost anything from a Spaniard. In hotels it goes further than a tip.

"Now," I went on, "tell her to be a good girl, and please to oblige me by doing what I ask."

"Will you promise to make a good *réclame* for me?" she asked, now all smiles and gaiety.

I promised that her name should ring throughout the country, and after that she hurried off to her dressing-room and did all she could to assist the rehearsal. She was a fine artist, and achieved a greater success than most Spanish dancers have had in England.

Arthur Roberts was also in this show, and revived memories of his great days in a number of clever bits of work. I had also induced Miss Nellie Taylor, who, in the war years, had become a favourite leading lady of musical comedy, to return to the stage. She had had a nervous breakdown, and had given up a most lucrative engagement with Sir Alfred Butt because somehow she got haunted by a fear of facing the footlights. This talented and beautiful young girl had the ball at her feet. There was no young English actress so equipped with the essentials for a musical comedy favourite. She was a legitimate successor to Lily Elsie. Facing the footlights had become a nightmare to her. Her obsession was that she would forget her lines, a curious obsession, but one that I could understand, as in my own short career as an actor I had experienced something of the kind myself. My wife and I were very fond of Nellie Taylor, and she spent a good deal of time with us in the country. It was necessary for her to work for a living, and she begged me to let her appear in the chorus; but I told her that not by such means would she regain confidence. With great difficulty I persuaded her to let me have some small scenes written for her, and a song or two. She said she was sure she couldn't manage a song, but she agreed to try a duet. It was only by assuring her that if, at the last moment, her courage failed her she would not be letting me down, as her scenes would be independent of the rest of the show and could easily be cut out, that I got her to appear. She did very well indeed, and everybody deplored that she had not more to do.

London, Paris, and New York played to capacity business, and for several months averaged £3500 per week. It was not until I put on the *League of Notions* at the New Oxford Theatre that business at the Pavilion began to decline, and I might say that more than once I have launched a much-praised production which immediately has adversely affected the receipts of one of my established successes. Always I have developed my revues by taking out the weaker scenes and introducing new features; but my unfortunate illness prevented me from following that course with *London, Paris, and New York*, just as it affected the production of the *League of Notions*.

I felt that if I could bolster up *London, Paris, and New York* with some novelties, while I took the holiday which had been so peremptorily ordered for me, I could set to work on a new edition when I came back. But the agents found me nothing that seemed suitable, so I thought I would risk the *sensational*, and went so far as to engage the celebrated tragedian, the late M. de Max, from the Comédie Française. He gave a scene from *Andromaque*. It was interesting, but not altogether successful. As Mr. A. B. Walkley said in a speech at a dinner of the Critics' Circle: "One went to Mr. Cochran's theatres, and would be astounded at the versatility of Nelson Keys in giving a superb rendering of the French classic drama in the tradition of the Comédie Française, only to find, upon looking at the programme, that it was M. de Max. Naturally," he went on, "on my next visit to a Cochran theatre, when I saw two young ladies on the stage I imagined they must be Societaires of the Comédie Française; but they turned out to be the Dolly Sisters!"

When I came back from my long, enforced holiday, I replaced Georgia O'Ramey at the Pavilion by Violet Loraine—it was Miss Loraine's last appearance on the stage before her marriage. She was excellent; but I am afraid that she did not affect the receipts. Her farewell to the audience when the curtain fell on the last performance of the revue provided a most emotional moment, although

good old Arthur Roberts put in a few remarks which savoured of the Pavilion of Victorian days. He was in a woman's costume, and topped all allusions to the forthcoming marriage by suggesting that "should the young couple be in need of a nurse, they would not forget this old party!"

Then also, during my absence in Spain, "Bunch" Keys was something of a trial. Keys always worked splendidly for me, but he refused to acknowledge the authority of those whom I left in charge. Once even he told the chorus-girls to walk out at rehearsal, and said he would be responsible if trouble arose. On another occasion he ordered a number of evening shirts from an expensive shirtmaker, and had them sent to the Pavilion with instructions to Mr. Charles Thorburn, the manager of the front of the house, to sign for them. Mr. Thorburn replied that if the shirts were for use in the theatre there must be an order from the office. Keys declared that unless they were paid for that night he would walk out of the theatre. The revue depended, of course, on Keys, and Thorburn did the only possible thing and paid for them on my behalf. These are just examples of how difficult some "stars" are to handle.

When I came back "Bunch" was friendly as ever to me, and I said nothing to him about the reports which I had received. When, however, he began to discuss a new engagement, I said, "Bunch, you're too expensive; you cost too much to dress. I have had Delysia here, and it's part of her job to display clothes. I thought she was expensive to dress, but you cost twice as much!"

"What do you mean?" he asked.

"Well," I answered, "do you know what you have cost me in clothes and accessories during the run of *London, Paris, and New York*? No less than £709, 3s. 2d. Look here," and I pointed out several items, "shoes, four guineas; another pair of shoes, four guineas!"

"Well," he said, "you don't expect me to go on the stage looking like a tramp, do you? I must wear the best."

I happened to glance at the shoes he was wearing, and I hazarded a guess.

"Those look to me like Manfields' ready-mades," I said.

"Well, what about it?" he said. "They're comfortable!"

One other bill I had to pay was £42 for false teeth, which Keys used in his Japanese scene.

It was on 17th January 1921 that I opened the New Oxford with my *League of Notions*. The Old Oxford Music-Hall had been transformed. It was now one of the handsomest theatres in the West End. The old bar had gone, and in its place was a Louis XVI. drawing-room, with costly china and furniture and original pictures by François Boucher and other famous artists. There were pear-shaped crystal chandeliers, and the most beautiful ceiling that I have seen in a theatre. The work was carried out by the firm of which Sir Charles Allom is head.

At one of the earliest performances of the *League of Notions* Sir Charles went to the stage box, where my wife was sitting with Sir Thomas Lipton. Both Sir Charles and Sir Thomas are well known as yachtsman—but they had never met. My wife introduced them, but Sir Thomas did not get Sir Charles' name right. They went out during the *entr'acte*. When Sir Thomas returned, he said to Mrs. Cochran, "What is the name of that manager of yours? he seems such a nice fellow."

I meant originally to spend £25,000 on the reconstruction and redecoration of the New Oxford; but the times were difficult. There were strikes; we had an accident to the proscenium arch; and it looked as if the whole building might come down. Contractors, too, would not give fixed estimates, and, one way and another, the alterations cost me nearly £80,000.

To crown all, in the middle of rehearsals, I was laid low by my illness. I was not on hand to speed things up, and from the middle of December to the opening day the various postponements cost me £400 a day. I was paying rent, and I was paying salaries.

I had brought over that most artistic producer, Mr. John Murray Anderson, to stage the show. I had taken the items I liked best from two of his New York productions, and had got together other turns and scenes. My title, *Charles B. Cochran's League of Notions*, was criticised, although I had the satisfaction of hearing from Mr. E. V. Lucas that he considered it the best title he had known.

Murray Anderson had the defects of the artist. Time and money were nothing to him. At one rehearsal a showgirl complained about her hat. Anderson said she must wear it. She cried, and said she wouldn't. For an hour they argued—scene set, the pay of a full stage staff, and the orchestra mounting up, light being consumed, and the players standing idly around. The end of the discussion was that Anderson dismissed the rehearsal. Whenever any of my staff spoke to him, he told them that he was in charge.

At last the Dolly Sisters, who had come from America to "star" in the production, put the case to the heads of my staff; they determined to take things into their own hands, and, indeed, if it hadn't been for the Dollys the revue would not have been produced when it was. They saw that I was being ruined and, although the doctor's orders were to keep all bad news from me, the Dollys came to my wife and put the situation to her. She gave them permission to tell the facts, and in the end I sent instructions to Murray Anderson, and to everybody concerned, that, ready or not, the show was to be produced on 17th January.

From that moment progress was made. Whenever changing a scene looked like holding up the revue, the Dolly Sisters were ready with their solution. "We will go on here," they said, "and do anything you like." They "gingered up" every one. They got the whole show going. Fortunately, before I was taken ill I had rehearsed them in some of their items, particularly their old-fashioned "Sister Duet" and the "Genée Dance"—otherwise they would have had little to do. Naturally Murray Anderson rather resented their interference, although it was for my benefit.

ROSIE JENNIE

THE DOLLY SISTERS

But there is no doubt that they saved me thousands of pounds.

I had the greatest admiration for Anderson's talent, and did everything he asked. I had spared no expense. I was determined that the opening of the New Oxford should be an event ; that the show should be worthy of the beautiful new theatre. On my last days in New York, when I thought I had engaged everybody I needed, I saw the Trix Sisters and snapped them at up a salary about one-fourth of what they now get. Earle Leslie (now Mistinguett's dancing partner) danced for me in a dark theatre at midnight just before I sailed, and he was added to the collection. I had seen in one of Charlie Dillingham's shows some collies which appeared in a number with the chorus ; they were a novelty, and I brought them. Mr. Benda, the Polish-American painter (not the French artist who has designed costumes for Charlot) lent me his wonderful masks, which were so effectively used by Miss Grace Christie. I had engaged a number of show-girls from America, who were types rather than beauties, and the effectiveness of their work unquestionably contributed to the success of the show. I had secured from Paris two Italian clowns, Fortunelli and Cirillino, who had been seen by Rosie Dolly at Olympia. They came in at a spot in the revue where a quick change was necessary.

This opening of the New Oxford was to be the summit of my success in London management. Every penny spent on the theatre came from my own pocket—from my own earnings from the theatres, and boxing. Every penny spent on the costly production was mine. I had bought silks from America which I could not find elsewhere ; I had Batik work done in New York ; I had searched Paris for other material, and ultimately had to get it made specially in Lyons. I had brought from America lamps for stage lighting, which could not then be obtained in England.

Nothing had been left to chance—and there at the end was I, unable to take part in the last rehearsals, unable to be present on the first night !

The Dolly Sisters not only helped at the theatre. At intervals of rehearsal they even relieved my wife nursing me. I can never sufficiently express my gratitude to those splendid artists and wonderful women.

The day before the *League of Notions* was produced I had a conference with my doctors. I impressed upon them that my all was wrapped up in the New Oxford. I had told my wife, the day that I was sentenced to bed, that I did not see how I could escape ruin. My illness had arrived at a time when I had so much at stake. Apart from the enormous undertaking of the Oxford, there was the fight in America, the revue at the Pavilion needed overhauling, attractions had to be found for the Garrick, the Aldwych, the Princes, and the Apollo. To cap it all, just before my illness, Sol Levy persuaded me, against my will, to accept the chairmanship of the new company which he was floating for the Palace, and almost the last thing to which I committed myself, before taking to my bed, was to subscribe £12,000, for shares in the Palace company. One-half of them were taken over by Sir Charles Allom.

All these obligations were so personal. I had a good staff; but the business of selecting and producing plays for my theatres was my job. I had no emergency organisation that could do it for me. The thought of being away for months—the doctors made it clear from the commencement of my illness that I must resign myself to that—almost sent me demented. But I made up my mind that things must run their course; that I must devote myself to getting well. At the bedside conference, the day before the first performance of the *League of Notions*, I demanded of the doctors that they should allow me to be in telephonic communication with the theatre on the night of the production. I was to have a programme by my side. A report was to be telephoned to me after each number and each scene. After the show I was to see the Dolly Sisters and one or two other people, and receive a full report. Sir Alfred Fripp and the other doctors consented to this; but only on

condition that after the first performance the telephone was to be taken from me, and that I should forget the theatre. But I persuaded them to let me talk to the box office the next morning.

Mrs. Cochran attended the first performance, and had in the box with her Lady Diana Duff-Cooper, Mrs. Seymour Hicks, and Mr. and Mrs. James Douglas. Constantly she came to the telephone and supplemented the reports I had received from the Dolly Sisters. Here is the sort of thing which came to me over the telephone, and was repeated to me by Miss Meum Stewart, who stayed away from *London, Paris, and New York* to sit beside me during this trying night.

8.15 : Prologue, " In the Fog " ; went well.
8.25 : Show Shop ; went big.
10.15 : " Rat-tat-a-tat " ; reception enormous ; countless calls.

The Duke of York and Prince George came to the performance, and made good use of the tambourines that were distributed to accompany the rat-tat-a-tat number. Georges Carpentier, then at the height of his popularity, was also in the audience.

It was past midnight when Sir Alfred Fripp, the Dolly Sisters, Mr. and Mrs. James Douglas, Miss Ellaline Terriss, and Mr. and Mrs. Fred Thompson came to my bedroom. I begged that they should tell me sincerely, and without reserve, what they thought. They told me I had the biggest success of my career ; that I could take a rest and not worry. Although it has never been my practice to take calls at the end of my productions, Miss Ellaline Terriss on this occasion took one for me. She told the audience that her husband, Seymour Hicks, as one of my oldest friends, had meant to say a word on my behalf, but, as he was fulfilling an engagement out of town, she, at his request, had taken his place.

The newspapers next day told the story of the reception of the *League of Notions*.

The *Times* said, " As a riot of fantastic colour there has probably been nothing on the London stage equal to the *League of Notions*. One scene of exquisite beauty follows another with such rapidity that it is difficult to keep pace with the ever-changing kaleidoscope." The *Telegraph* had the lines, " In any description of its marvels it is difficult to know where to begin and where to end." The *Daily News* called the production " Wonderful ! " " Stupendous ! " " Extraordinary ! " Mr. Baughan said it was " the climax of all my productions." The *Daily Mirror* described it as " without precedent." James Douglas was so stirred by the show that he wrote an article in *London Opinion*, which he headed " Cockie of the Walk," in which he said, " My mind was so utterly steeped, flooded, and saturated with pictorial loveliness that it became numb. This is not the language of meaningless panegyric.

" The whole night was deliriously mad, and whenever there were spasms of sobriety the Dolly Sisters pranced them away. What are those twins made of ? Heaven only knows ! Their vitality is staggering."

Mr. Hannen Swaffer compared the beauties of the revue to a Phil May drawing. He wrote, " The value is all in what you rub out. It is what I would call the de-de-Courvillising of revue " ; and he went on to say, " Mr. C. B. Cochran's gift of imagination and power to evoke and utilise the imaginations of others has never been demonstrated in a more convincing manner than by the *League of Notions*."

Everybody concerned in the revue had a share in the success ; but I knew that my thanks were due principally to the Dolly Sisters, and I echo the words of the critic of the *Globe* who said, " It is impossible to assess the value of the Dolly Sisters as contributors to the show—they simply immerse themselves in the needs of the occasion and emerge in triumph."

The Dolly Sisters had not been provided with great opportunities—with numbers and scenes in which they could make individual hits—but they were always helping

to build up scenes and numbers. In short, what they did was the essence of good team work. Rosie Dolly said once that, but for my illness, she would have screamed so loudly at Murray Anderson that she would be heard from the Oxford to our house in Aldford Street. Murray Anderson realised their worth, and later made them many offers to "star" in his Greenwich Village Follies. The worth of the "Dollys" was demonstrated when late in the run Rosie met with an accident while coming up through a stage trap, and the sisters were out of the bill for a fortnight. Although their places were charmingly taken by two English girls, the driving force that the Dollys put into their work was missing, and, although no alteration was made in the show, each night it dragged more and more until, at the end of the fortnight, the playing-time was ten minutes more than when the Dollys were appearing.

Individual successes were made by Grace Christie in her "Dance of Masks" and "Bubble Dance," by Rita Lee, an exquisite pupil of Pavlova, by Josephine and Helen Trix. Mr. Hassell and Mr. Baskcomb, the comedians, did not have a very great chance. Mr. Bert Coote, who can be very funny, failed in a golf scene which he was most anxious to introduce. When at last I was allowed to see the show I begged Bert Coote to cut down this scene; but he was in love with it and rather than give way he preferred to leave the show.

The outstanding feature of the *League of Notions* was the beauty of the production, for which Mr. Murray Anderson was entitled to full marks. The comedy was on the weak side, and most of the criticisms dwelt upon that fact. I myself do not understand why, if a show satisfies by its beauty, it should be considered a defect if it is not funny as well. It is not considered a fault if a funny show has not beautiful scenery and dresses. Said the *Daily Sketch*: "Charlie Cochran has set a pace in production that will drive other managers into despair. It is revue with the stupidity left out."

Now as to finance. I believed that, barring mishaps, my *League of Notions* could not fail to create an enormous sensation. I had tried deliberately to eclipse everything that had been done before in the way of stage production. I had considered carefully every phase of the venture. I had a beautiful new theatre. More interest had been aroused in the production than in any production within memory. Unless I was mistaken, the demand for seats would be so great that I should be able to augment my prices. I was afraid to discuss such a project even with my staff, for there is no institution so conservative as the theatre, and I knew that the guinea-stalls' experiment at the St. Martin's Theatre would be quoted against me. But, secretly, from my sickroom I had ordered duplicate tickets, for the stalls to be 15s. at ordinary performances, and one guinea on Saturday nights.

The morning after the production, when I had read the newspapers, I telephoned to Mr. Stubbs, my box-office keeper. I asked him to tell me frankly what the outlook was. I implored him not to deceive me because of my illness. He replied that the demand exceeded anything he had ever known. I asked him, if I charged 15s. for the stalls and a guinea on Saturday nights, would the people pay the price? His reply was, "Mr. Cochran, they won't worry about the price; they're only anxious to get seats."

"Very well then," I said, "I am sending you a parcel of tickets at those prices; discard the others."

Mr. Stubbs did what I told him and, for a long time, we played to over £4000 a week; and I was getting back my production costs at the rate of £1500 a week.

Then, without warning, we ran into bad times. There was a transport strike, a strike of electricians, and other strikes, all of which had a serious effect on theatre business generally. On top of this came the first overpoweringly hot summer we had had for many years. Business in the theatres became very bad indeed, and naturally the New Oxford was affected, although we still played to a consider-

MR. C. B. COCHRAN ENTERS A MONASTERY IN AN ENDEAVOUR TO ESCAPE PUBLICITY

Drawn by Mr. VICTOR HICKS, and reproduced by permission of *The Bystander*.

able profit. Then came the mishap to one of the Dolly Sisters, which slowed up the show.

All these circumstances diminished my profit which, at the end of a ten months' run, was only about £7000; in normal times it would have exceeded £20,000. When other theatres were playing to £700 or £800 a week, the *League of Notions* was playing to from £2500 to £3200; but every week my expenses were in the neighbourhood of £2500.

CHAPTER XXIX

My Holiday in Spain—Luck at Roulette—Why I stayed Five Weeks in Seville—The most Interesting Part of the Bull-Fight—Spanish Dancing that is "too Spanish"—The Dancer Diaghileff tried to engage—I discover Trini, the most Beautiful Girl in the World—Carlito, who knew Everybody, or said he did—I take Trini to a Bull-Fight—Scandal—Why her Contract did not include California—Diaghileff's *Mot* about English Managers.

I HAD been in bed for some weeks, and there were no signs of my getting better, so one day Ellaline Terriss (Mrs. Seymour Hicks) persuaded my wife and the doctors to let her bring a Danish masseur, a Dr. Johanssen, to look at me. Dr. Johanssen, who, I am sorry to say has since died, went over me very carefully—it was my nerves he was anxious about—and at times his examination gave me pain. He promised to have me right within twenty treatments.

In a few days, as he massaged me, I felt myself improving. After the seventeenth treatment I was free from pain; but I had been in bed nearly two months, and was weak, and my doctors ordered me away for a long rest.

I can never make up my mind where I want to go for a holiday. There are so many places in the world I want to see. But Paris is always a good jumping-off point. Immediately one is across the Channel the worries of the office disappear. So I spent a day or two in Paris, and had one very lucky afternoon at the races. As I got past the gates at Longchamps I met Gilbert Marsh, the younger of the brothers whose exploits at Ghent I have described; he gave me a tip for the first race. I didn't take it very seriously; but, as I did not know one horse from another, I put a couple of hundred francs on it—it came up a

winner at something like five to one. Just before the next race Marsh asked me if I had backed his tip. I told him I had, and he said he had heard about a horse for the next race which had a good chance; also he knew of a real good thing for the third race. I took both his tips, putting what I had won on the first race on the second, and half my winnings of the second race on the third. I met him again and he gave me a tip for the last race, and, as I had a good bet on that and it came home, I won altogether about 20,000 francs.

After my second win Marsh told me he wasn't doing very well himself; he hadn't much money to bet with. Would I lend him £100? I said I hadn't the cash on me, but I could give him a cheque. He said that would be all right; he'd get the cheque changed on the course; so I wrote out the cheque. Before he left me he asked me for my address in Paris, and the day after the races there arrived at my hotel, with his card, a magnificent basket of flowers and £100 in bank-notes. I have not seen Gilbert Marsh since.

I decided that Spain would suit me for my holiday and I set out for Madrid—breaking the journey at Biarritz.

To avoid the bother of the Customs at the frontier station I motored from Biarritz to San Sebastian, and took the Madrid train from there—an unimportant detail, perhaps, except that my one night in San Sebastian proved extremely lucky to me. I am not much of a gambler, except in my business. Cards give me no pleasure and, although I am very fond of going to the races, I don't bet much. I am by no means a knowledgeable man as far as turf matters are concerned. But at San Sebastian, to kill time, I went to the Casino, with 3000 pesetas in my pocket. This amounted at the time to something over £100.

I watched the roulette for some time and then casually put 100 pesetas on the seven. That number turned up. I missed a spin or two, then won three coups in succession, each time on red. Then I placed 100 francs on the seven and on the nine. Seven rolled up for me twice in

succession. That seemed remarkable. I was not in the Casino more than an hour, and surprised my wife, when I went back to the hotel, by throwing 20,000 pesetas on the bed, which was what remained of my winnings, after tipping the croupiers, and making a few small gifts to some less fortunate players with whom I had struck up an acquaintance. I had played quite recklessly, without any kind of system. Still, the heartening experience made me look forward to my holiday in Spain with increased pleasure. When I came to San Sebastian, on my way back to London, I tempted fortune once more to the extent of 3000 pesetas, and lost that sum very quickly.

The first impression of Madrid can be disappointing. To me it suggested an imitation Paris, and even a bit of Berlin; but those who have time to explore will find the full charm of Spain in the older parts of Madrid.

And it is not until you have opportunity of going to the Prado that you can realise the full genius of Velazquez and Murillo. But to me the greatest joy was Goya, of whose works I had seen but few examples. Goya gave to me a new vision of Spain. In the cellars of the Prado one finds the designs which he executed for the tapestries of the Escorial, and these tapestries brought Goya from obscurity to his enviable position as a fashionable painter in Madrid. These designs fascinated me because of their theatrical value. As for Goya's picture of Spanish life—"The Carnival," "The Mad-House," his groups of drunken harvesters, his pictures of the bull-ring, his picnic parties (an impression of which I am giving with the aid of Massine at the Trocadero), his gallants, his pelota players, and his washerwomen—they conjured up a Spain which I longed to learn more about. Goya made me feel that he must have had something of the spirit of Degas when he painted ballet-girls, race-horses, and absinthe drinkers. I was not surprised to learn that Goya in his vivid youth had taken part in bull-fights himself—I thought here, indeed, is a painter who must have known and lived the life of his time. As for the Maja Desnudas, I have never seen a nude

which gave me the impression of so much vitality. The woman's flesh seems to quiver, and her pulses to throb. She sets you thinking a little of Manet's Olympia.

Toledo, Cordova, Burgos, the Escorial, all enchanted me. I have lived since for the time when I can visit them again. But it was Seville that made me captive.

An English friend in Madrid had told me what to see there ; he reckoned that I should require about two days to do it all. After three days, he assured me, I should be bored stiff. Well, I stayed there five weeks, and felt more regret at coming away than I have felt in leaving any place.

For fully a week I did not begin to " do the sights " in the ordinary way. It was enough for me to walk about the streets, sit about the squares and in the beautiful park, discover new eating and drinking places and new dance halls, just taking in the unaccustomed and strange beauty of every corner of the city.

I was fortunate both in the time of my visit and in the friends I encountered. I saw the wonderful Holy Week celebrations, and the processions described so graphically by Ibanez in *Blood and Sand*, and I stayed until the time of the Feria, when the whole place dances for days and nights.

The excuse for the Feria is, I believe, a cattle show, and farmers come to buy and sell cattle. But the Sevillianos don't worry much about that. They build streets of casetas—pretty little bungalows, which for three days are the scenes of singing, dancing, and feasting. King Alfonso and his Queen were not at Seville the time I was at the Feria, but they were there the year before. The fashionable clubs have large casetas in which to receive their guests. The *monde chic* of Seville joins in the general celebration. And every woman in Seville wears a bright shawl, and a crimson carnation or rose in her hair.

The Feria takes place at the time when the orange trees, acacias, and violets all bloom in the beautiful park, and their perfume pervades the whole town.

Every afternoon there is a bull-fight, and to me one

of the most interesting parts of the bull-fights was the *encierro.*

In the early hours of the morning the bulls are rushed by men on horseback through the streets to the Plaza. They are surrounded by decoy oxen (*cabestros*), which have large bells round their necks. The big fighting bulls could not be handled without these *cabestros.* They will not, however, follow the *cabestros* to which they have not been accustomed. When, for instance, the bulls come from different *ganaderias,* they have to be taken through the streets at different times of the night. Should the bulls and *cabestros* of one *ganaderia* encounter those of another, there would be a proper battle.

The best fighting bulls in Spain are supposed to be those belonging to Don Eduardo Miura. A *corrida* (bull-fight) in which Miura bulls are used is the bull-fight that attracts the greatest crowds. It is said that each Miura bull has some special characteristic, and that even the most experienced *Toreros* are never certain what he will do.

At the Easter *Corrida,* in Seville, the Spanish women wear mantillas over their heads and shoulders, and quantities of flowers. The Spanish shawls, or *Mantones de Manilla,* are generally thrown over the front of the boxes. The effect is superb. The bull-fight is the only thing in Spain that starts punctually ; the people are in their seats well before the advertised hour, and the hum of their voices, joyful, laughing, full of expectation and excitement, is a fitting prelude to the arrival of the *Cuadrilla.*

First come the *Alguacilos,* with velvet cloaks and feathered hats, then the *Espadas* and the *Banderilleros,* whose clothes are made of rich satin or silk in shades of rose pink, turquoise, violet, pearl grey, emerald, with superb embroideries in gold and silver. The capes they wear (*capote de Paseo*) are made of satin, and are heavily embroidered in gold ; occasionally jewels are introduced among the embroideries. They wear a black velvet hat and a wide waist-band of silk. A *Torero's* outfit costs in its entirety not less than £100.

A friend of mine, long resident in Spain—a British Consul—told me that he disapproves of bull-fights. The first he saw made him positively ill, but whenever there is one within a hundred miles of his home he feels compelled to go. I think I understand the fascination. My English—to the backbone—man-servant, Rosling, was in Spain with me. The first Sunday I was in Madrid I found him looking like a dead man when I got back to my hotel before dinner. He had been to a bull-fight! "It was awful," he said. But he went to see all the bull-fights in Seville, and paid for his seats.

Until one has been to the south of Spain it is impossible to appreciate Spanish dancing. It does not transplant well. I remember Carmencita, and I have admired many Spanish dancers since. Also I have seen many Spanish dancers triumphant in Paris and London, but unknown in Spain.

It was at the Novedades in Seville, where I first began to understand that there was a three-act drama in the Flamenco. The walk through the Calle de las Sierpes to the Novedades is a preparation for the dance itself. It is here that one sees the bull-fighters, groups of them—clean shaven, with black hair cut very short, and shaven over the temple and ears, very red lips, brilliant teeth, and wearing much jewellery in their frilled and embroidered shirts, on the fingers, or hanging from their watch chains. The street itself is about as wide as the pavement in Bond Street.

The Café de Novedades is at the end of the Sierpes, where it is joined by the Calle de Campaña. A front seat near the stage costs you half a peseta (about 4d. or 5d., according to the variations of the exchange). The performance always begins with a Cuadra Flamenco—a specimen of which was introduced during my Russian Ballet Season at the Princes Theatre.

Few Anglo-Saxons realise the gulf that divides the dancing of Spain from that of other countries. In our country, and in others, dancing is an art acquired by

patience and study. In Spain it is as natural for the people to dance as it is for them to eat and drink, consequently their dancing is a natural expression of life. In its way it is a religious expression, and is by no means always gay. Often there is something about it which is more likely to produce a lump in the throat than a laugh.

The Flamenco expresses, allegorically, life and love. I know nothing more moving than when a great dancer, wearing a long dress that trails on the ground, leaves her chair and, to the strumming of a guitar and the beat of the hands and feet of her companions seated in a semi-circle behind her, commences to dance. At first she is languid; her arms float in the air. Then she trembles; appears shaken with ecstasy; waves of emotion seem to give movement to her limbs; the castanets awake her; her eyes open; her hips move like waves; she turns her body without moving her feet; she stretches out her arms as though to embrace. Then immense energy seems to possess her. She cries. The hand-clapping, accompanied by cries from her companions, increases. Gradually she subsides. The undulations of the body grow less violent; she appears almost to fall, and then is quite still.

Although these dances are essentially natural, they are cultivated to a most elaborate degree of art. The steps and poses are innumerable; the castanet playing can be brought to a wonderful state of perfection. Perhaps the greatest exponent of the castanets is Argentina. The real Spanish dancing is so different from the dancing shown by Otero, Tortajada, and others, that most English and American visitors are at first disappointed when they go to Spain. It is not "Spanish enough" for them. There are joyous dances, such as the *Bolero*, in which the feet skim and bound in intricate steps, and the dancers spin, glide, and almost fly. But it is the languorous Spanish dance that interprets the soul of Spain.

Spanish artists, like Argentina, have rearranged the natural dances of Spain for the stage, quickening the effect while retaining the rhythm and national characteristics.

When I saw Pastora Imperia I was told that she was past her prime, and that I should have seen her fifteen years ago. But even as I saw her, the description of her by Benavente does not seem to be exaggerated.

> "Watching Pastora Imperia, life becomes more intense, the loves and hates of other worlds pass before our eyes, and we feel ourselves heroes, bandits, hermits, or champions, shameless bullies of the tavern —whatever is highest and lowest in one. A desire to shout out horrible things takes possession of us: Gitanaza! Thief! Assassin! Then we turn to curse. Finally, summing it all up, in a burst of exultation we praise God, because we believe in God while we look at Pastora Imperia, just as we do when we read *Shakespeare.*"

An Andalusian dance, accompanied by song, is the *Tirana.* The men wave their hats and handkerchiefs, and the women sway gracefully,and make play with their aprons. I believe that every province in Spain has a different *jota,* which is a dance in three-four time. The Gomez trio did the *jota* at the London Pavilion. The *Sevilliana* is danced by women of society, as well as by the people. As danced by the young ladies of Spain, however, it is a different thing from the Sevilliana danced by moonlight in some beautiful garden, by boys and girls of the people, to the clashing of castanets and the clanging of guitars. Then it comes very near nature.

The *Tango* and *Malaguena* are two more of the many varieties of Spanish dances. At the Novedades, and other cafés in Seville, the singing of *Coplas* (couplets) is very popular. This form of vocalisation is very Andalusian. It is a sort of sustained tremolo—the singer appearing to sing the verse without drawing breath. A very good example was heard in the Cuadra Flamenco at the Princes Theatre.

As I have said, I was lucky in my companionship in Seville, for I met Serge Diaghileff, Stravinsky, Don Pedro

Morales, so well known in London, and Don Luis Molini, a Spanish lawyer who speaks English perfectly. Through them I got to know the Lafitas, artists of Seville, and Gustavo Bacarisas, an artist born in Gibraltar, who speaks perfect English. These were the very people to show me Seville as the tourist never sees it.

Almost nightly we gathered together some of the best dancers, singers, and guitarists, and arranged our own Quadra Flamenco. I have a souvenir in the shape of a fan, upon which Juan Lafita has done some drawings of one of those evenings. We had hired a room in a tavern, and had gathered together some famous dancers and singers; but a guitar player had not turned up. We searched all the cafés, but could not find one free. All we could find was a harpist. Still, the dancers had enjoyed plenty of good sherry (*pepi*), and were ready to make the best of a bad job. Ramires, one of the most classic male dancers, clapped his hands for the rhythm, and strummed what he wanted the harpist to vamp. The harpist couldn't get it at all. At last we asked him to play what he knew. Curiously enough, although a Spaniard, the only tune he knew was "Champagne Charlie is My Name."

Ramires, I believe, has three times been engaged to come to England to dance; but always on the eve of departure he has changed his mind. Diaghileff once more engaged him while I was there; but to the best of my belief Ramires has not yet left Seville.

Diaghileff's negotiations were amusing. He asked Ramires what he wanted by way of payment. Ramires with a noble gesture said he left it to the great impresario. Diaghileff suggested a sum. Ramires bowed and said it was munificent. The next day he told Diaghileff that, upon reflection, he thought he would need double the sum mentioned—he had heard London was expensive. Diaghileff agreed. A few more days, then Ramires said he had reflected again—he must have an additional sum for his living expenses in London. Diaghileff, who was very anxious to engage him, again agreed to a supplementary

TRINI

"The most beautiful girl in the world."

sum. The last stage of the negotiations was when Ramires spoke eloquently of how lonely he would feel in London, so he would induce a friend to accompany him—for the same honorarium as himself! The friend was not a dancer, but he was an excellent horseman.

One night I went to the principal music-hall of Seville, the Salon Imperial, to see Dora la Cordobesita, of whom I had heard a great deal. But I had mistaken the time of the performance, and I met the audience, including Diaghileff, coming out. Diaghileff told me he didn't think la Cordobesita would interest me, but if I went to the Kursaal, opposite, I should see the most beautiful girl in the world. I was too late that night; but the next night I did both shows. The Salon Imperial as a place of entertainment would not compare favourably with the Hoxton Varieties; but Dora was very interesting. She is a gipsy type, and very versatile in her songs and dances, which are characteristically national. I saw her several times, and invariably she had to do nine or ten numbers. She has had several offers to come to England; but not only does she want a very large salary, she has a terror of the sea. She has not been even to Paris, the salary she demands always standing in the way of an engagement. I am very doubtful, though, if she would be more than a success of curiosity in any foreign country. She is in no sense international like Raquel Meller.

At the Kursaal I sat through a long programme of singers and dancers—all girls, most of them good-looking, and I wondered which was Diaghileff's beauty. Then, last turn of all, there came a young girl who appeared to me ravishing. She was popular with her audience, and did six or seven numbers, changing her costume for each. Her loveliness seemed to increase with each song. When she smiled at her audience they became ecstatic. That smile would conquer any audience in the world. Diaghileff was right. She was *the most beautiful girl in the world.*

In the Kursaal I found a young Spaniard named Carlito, the son of a keeper of a Venta where I often lunched, and

he spoke English. I asked him if he knew the girl, and he assured me he knew her very well. He had also assured me on several occasions that he knew Sarah Bernhardt, Douglas Fairbanks, Lloyd George, and King Alfonso. He had, he said, been dancing partner to Gaby Deslys; he had ridden races for the Rothschilds; he had played for the films in Hollywood; and he had been *maître d'hôtel* at the Savoy in London. He was a pioneer flying man, and he had also done a bit of bull-fighting. He was a great character, was Carlito.

Whether or not he had known the girl before, what he did was to produce her for me; and when I saw her I could not believe it was the same elegant creature I had seen on the stage. She was pretty enough, but she was wearing a childish frock, and her hair, which had been sleek and flat and shiny black on the stage, was combed and fluffy, and hung loosely down her back.

She was accompanied by a very stout lady, her mother, two little sisters, a handsome youngish-looking man, her father, and an enormously stout man, her godfather.

After the show at the Kursaal the centre tables were cleared, and there was dancing. I ordered sherry and ham for the whole party, and I asked, through Carlito, if the young lady would like to come to England, to Londres? To the uneducated Spaniard Londres signifies a foreign country, no matter where it may be—and Londres was something they had never dreamed of. It suggested adventures.

The proposal was discussed by all the family—all of them in turn shook their heads. I was looked at very guardedly. I felt that my intentions were being misunderstood. Carlito said that I was an important theatrical manager from England; but I am afraid that that carried no weight. The mother told me, and what she said was carefully translated by Carlito, that her daughter had been offered large diamond rings, but that she never went out without her mother. I explained that I didn't want to take her out without her mother, that I was making a serious business

proposition. But that night, at any rate, I made no effect.

I told my friends, Morales and Molini, about the girl. They went to see her. They endorsed my views of her beauty. Molini, it transpired, had known her aunt, who was even more beautiful when her age. I wrote to my friends in London, among others to Mr. William Pollock, who wrote of my discovery in the *Daily Mail.*

Night after night Molini, Morales, and myself went to the Kursaal, and discussed the project of engaging Trini for London ; but we got very little further, until one night Trini —Trini Ramos was her full name—said she would like to go to a bull-fight with me—the first bull-fight of the Feria week.

The father and mother were agreeable, providing there was a feminine chaperon with us, and that seats not far from us were provided for them. Also—this was Trini's stipulation—an open carriage and pair were to call for her at her house.

Morales found the lady to accompany us, a carriage was ordered, and it was arranged that Morales should fetch Trini, and then pick me up at the hotel. Morales would not hear of my going to the Calle Torres, where Trini's family resided. What he expected or feared I do not know ; but he absolutely forbade me to go.

On the day of the bull-fight I waited for Morales to come along with Trini and the carriage, and as time went by, and the opening moment of the bull-fight passed, I began to get annoyed. The part of the *Corrida* which fascinated me most was the ceremonial of the opening.

At last the carriage came in sight—and I saw Morales sitting alone. He told me that when he got to the house he had found Trini and her mother in their nightgowns and in tears. There had been a quarrel with the father on a matter of finance. To punish them he had taken their clothes away, and had sold the tickets for the bull-fight which were to have been used by himself and his wife.

Morales warned me to let this be a lesson to me—not to proceed further with an engagement such as I had

proposed. He knew people of the Ramos class, he said, and he saw nothing but disappointment for me. I had offered to take Trini for a number of years at a fixed salary, and to have her taught English, singing, and dancing.

I was inclined to think that Morales was right, and for a day or two I abandoned my project. Then I received a letter from Trini. She begged that I would ask her once more to a bull-fight, and that I would go on with the idea of the contract. I must confess that, idling my time away as I was in Seville, the adventure interested me ; so on the following Sunday the carriage again set forth, and this time it returned with Trini, resplendent in white mantilla and comb, white dress, and red rose.

Her appearance in our box created something of a sensation. Certainly she was the loveliest creature there. Glasses from all parts were levelled at her. After the *Corrida*, it was part of our contract that I should drive her up and down the Delicias, where the good folk of Seville take the air. The poorer people of Seville will go without food to be able to drive in an open carriage on the Delicias. It was the proudest moment of Trini's life.

I didn't know that I had let myself in for a pretty scandal. By this time I was fairly well known in Seville, and next day it was gossip of the town that the Englishman staying at the Ingleterra Hotel had bought a Spanish girl from the Kursaal. A friend of mine from Jerez, taking tea with the British Consul in Seville, heard the story from the Consul's wife. My wife, who had been with me during the first weeks of my stay in Seville, had returned to London to see her mother, who was ill. Much was made of my having taken advantage of her absence. Fortunately she returned, and I took her to see Trini.

Great as my admiration had been, my wife's was greater. We went almost nightly to the Kursaal in time for Trini's turn. Afterwards we would sit and talk to the family. My wife's arrival made the contract easy of fulfilment ; but it was not settled before a long session at a lawyer's office. Just as everything seemed to be in order, there began a long

SAVOY HOTEL.

DINNER

GIVEN BY

Mrs CHARLES B COCHRAN

and THE DOLLY SISTERS

SUNDAY,

25th SEPTEMBER,

1921.

. . . Menu . . .

Huitres Musgrave.
Zakouski

Consommé Julienne
Creme Ambassadeur

Turine de Filet de Sole Carmen

Jambon Braise Lamberty, Sce Pergourdine
Epinards aux Fleurons

Grouse à la Broche
Salade Caprice.

Poires Ines.
Friandises

MENU, DESIGNED BY CHARLES GRAVES, FOR A SUPPER GIVEN UPON MR. COCHRAN'S RETURN FROM SPAIN

and tremendously animated conversation in which the only word I could recognise was California.

"What is the trouble about California?" I asked. Then it was explained that the contract called for Trini's services in England and America, and the family understood that California was a part of America. I agreed that this was so, and that California was a lovely part of America. But the family would have nothing to do with California. They had seen film pictures of Indians and cowboys. California was a wild and dangerous country. Trini must not go there. So the words, "Exclusive of California," were added after the words "United States."

As I have said, I had not come to Spain for business purposes, but for a rest. But it was natural, meeting Diaghileff constantly as I did, that we should talk about the Russian Ballet. Daily we had wonderful lunch-parties in the brilliant sunshine at the Venta Antequera. The proprietor, Carlito's father, was a great character. He had been the servant of the famous *Torero*, Bombita. I would tell him that I wanted a simple luncheon, just one dish. I would impress this upon him, and he would promise that my wishes should be respected. Presently the table would be set with fifty kinds of *hors d'œuvres*. When I pointed out that I did not want them, he would say I must have something just while I was waiting. Then, instead of the dish I had ordered, he would bring some eggs cooked in some new way which he said I must try, and so on and so on, until half a dozen dishes had been served. Many times I tried to impress upon him, through Morales or Molini, that I wanted one dish only; but I never got away with less than six. Here is a fair specimen of the sort of menu he would serve to us:

Hors d'œuvres (fifty kinds).
Huevos (Eggs), Es galpados eksu Pim-pam-pum.
Almajas (Cockles), al natural.
Kola de Toro (Oxtail), à la Andaluza.
Salmonetes al Horno (Red Mullet).
Pescados Frito Variados (Twelve or more kinds of fried fish. He would never serve only one kind).
Perdiz (Partridge), Encebolladas.

DESSERTS

Flan on Compota de Yeemas de San Leandro.
Bombones Cerecetos.
Fruta Variadas del Tiempo.

CAFÉ

Licor lamothe Triple.
Seco Esquis.

VINOS

Carta Negra.
Cefa Rhin, la Hingosa.
Apéritip.
Cocktail Louis xv.

A Frenchman, who had lived in Spain, was asked what he thought of Spanish cooking. He replied, " It is worse even than that of the English." But, as Newnham Davis said, it was the Spaniards who taught the French to stuff turkeys with chestnuts, to have orange salad with wild duck, to cook eggs in many different and delightful ways. At any rate, I have never had better food than at the Venta Antequera, and it is not surprising, after a luncheon such as the one detailed above, preceded by a bottle of Manzanilla as an *apéritif*, and with the best coffee I have ever tasted, and a cigar to follow, that Serge Diaghileff should persuade me that I needed a season of Russian Ballet at the Princes Theatre. Diaghileff is one of the most delightful companions I have known—he could charm a dead man to life. Were the world run on right lines, he would be appointed International Minister of Arts by all the countries to whom he has brought beauty with his Russian Ballet, for that wonderful combination of artistry, talent, and beauty has done more to improve the taste of the world in colour and in music than any institution ever founded. Its influence has extended far beyond the theatre. It has penetrated the most modest homes of England, America, and the Continent.

Diaghileff has a mordant wit. Once, talking to me

about the managers with whom he had had dealings in England, he described Sir Alfred Butt as the most charming of men before one had signed a contract with him; Sir Oswald Stoll as a most charming man after the contract had been signed; and Sir Thomas Beecham as a trial both before and after the signing of the contract.

CHAPTER XXX

Sarah Bernhardt makes her Last London Appearance under my Management—I am invited to see Bernhardt in Paris—She talks of Irving—Ellen Terry and Raquel Meller—I lose £5000 on Ten Weeks of Russian Ballet—Why I took off the Chauve-Souris—Balieff's "Eggs-and-Bacon" Test—*Fun of the Fayre*, one of my Best Revues—Trini's First Appearance—The Fratellini hissed—A Painful Disappointment—Their Great Success since in Paris—The Dancer whom the Stage Doorkeeper turned out—"A Sink of Iniquity"—Trini's Dressing-Room Shrine—Her Disappearance from the Boarding-House—The Young Commercial Traveller—Smuggling her out of the London Pavilion—Her Father's Letter.

WHILE I was in Seville Sarah Bernhardt played under my management at the Princes Theatre; it proved to be her last engagement in England. She arrived in London on Saturday, 4th April, for her opening performance on the Monday. On her journey from Paris to Boulogne she had one or two mishaps, which caused her to spend the night at Montreuil-sur-Mer, and to have to leave there at five o'clock in the morning. She had a breakdown motoring from Dover. But things like that never upset Bernhardt.

Her triumph in the play *Daniel*, by Louis Verneuil, was not merely a tribute to the actress because of past achievements—it was a natural outcome of feelings that were deeply moved by her performance. Mr. Walkley found it a strange evening of reminiscence "overlaying and almost obliterating immediate experience." He "envied the young enthusiasts present, for they could accept the evening just for what it gave them; they were spared our sadness."

On my way home from Seville I accepted an invitation from Mme. Bernhardt to take tea with her. I have seldom

PHOTOGRAPH OF SARAH BERNHARDT

Inscribed as follows :—

"À Monsieur Cochran avec ma profonde sympathie,

SARAH BERNHARDT.

passed a more wonderful hour. After five minutes I felt that this wonderful woman was not old and crippled, but beautiful and young. As a rule I am nervous of speaking French. With her I did not feel self-conscious, and talked with ease.

She asked where was the successor of our Irving and our adorable Ellen Terry? She spoke with affection and admiration of the Guitrys. Lucien, she said, was the sole survivor of the great actors of the past. She was enormously interested in the progress of Yvonne Printemps. I told her that I thought in England our actors were better than our actresses, and she said it was so in France, she believed. The divine spark in any age was rare, but if there was one woman in the world who possessed genius, she said, it was Raquel Meller. She had made an appearance with Raquel Meller in Madrid, and she welcomed the visits of the Spanish actress up to her death.

I am most proud to have been enabled to present Bernhardt in London, even though in her old age.

I followed Mme. Bernhardt's engagement with a repertoire of French plays, with M. André Brulé and Mlle. Madeleine Lely as principal exponents. The season was interesting, but not astonishingly successful. On 26th May I began my season of Russian Ballet under the direction of Serge Diaghileff. That delightful writer, Mr. E. B. Osborn, wrote in the *Morning Post*: "All London will go to see the Russian Ballet for beauty's, as well as for duty's sake. We are all very much obliged, indeed, to Mr. C. B. Cochran for giving us a delightful substitute for the missing opera, and so creating for us a mirage, as it were, of that joyous and prolonged agitation of the urban soul known as 'The London Season.' Indeed I can sit in my stall and imagine myself back again in the wondrous world beyond the gulf of the Great War—a narrow sea of time which is yet deep enough to hold all the tears of eternity."

Scheherazade, the Prince Igor dances, Le Carnaval, Les Sylphides, The Good-Humoured Ladies, La Boutique

Fantasque, Children's Tales, Cleopatra, and other old favourites were given, and the prime favourite of the season was unquestionably Lydia Lopokova. Señor Manoel de Falla was present at the performance of his ballet, *The Three-Cornered Hat,* and had an enormous ovation. It introduced a beautiful young *gitana,* Maria Dalbaicin, who was discovered by Mr. Diaghileff in an artist's studio in Seville, the night after he had found Trini. He chaffed me, saying that he had found a " more beautiful " than my " most beautiful."

An innovation for English audiences that led to mixed criticism was the Cuadro Flamenco. People either loved it or hated it. I had been with Diaghileff in Seville when he found most of the Spanish dancers. Financially the Cuadro Flamenco was a great help to the ballet season. During the early part of the season the receipts were helped on the nights on which it was given. Picasso supplied an admirable setting. A new ballet, *Chout,* by Serge Prokofieff, was a futuristic affair, and one critic imagined that it would " be frightfully entertaining to blood-thirsty children and homicidal lunatics." On the other hand, another found it " witty, rather than humorous," and the music, he said, " admirably expresses the crude humour of the story."

Stravinsky himself superintended the rehearsals of *Petrouchka* and *L'Oiseau de Feu.* The greatest interest of the season was reserved for the revival of his *Le Sacre du Printempts.* Our receipts for the first performance were £667, 18s. Stravinsky's music was almost fiercely attacked by the critics, and for the second performance we drew only £255, 13s. 3d. My orchestra for the performance of this ballet cost me £94, 18s. per night.

The season had so many novelties, apart from the large repertoire of old favourites, that artistically it was one of my most interesting undertakings. To have done the Cuadro Flamenco in London was worth the £5007 which I lost on the ten-weeks' season. Our weekly receipts for the season were :

Week ending May 28th (4 performances)								£1282	12	0
,,	,,	June 4th						2793	4	0
,,	,,	,, 11th						2822	0	0
,,	,,	,, 18th						2724	9	0
,,	,,	,, 25th						2520	6	0
,,	,,	July 2nd						2368	0	0
,,	,,	,, 9th						1843	15	0
,,	,,	,, 16th						1993	9	0
,,	,,	,, 23rd						1707	2	0
,,	,,	,, 30th						2005	1	0

Commencing 28th June 1921 I gave a short season of French plays by Louis Verneuil at the Garrick Theatre. He had an admirable company, and the plays gave considerable amusement to a regular but limited audience. The season was not financially successful.

Soon after they started in Paris I saw the Chauve-Souris. Since the first time I saw the Russian Ballet I had not encountered such a real surprise in the theatre. Going to the theatre as I do in several countries during the year, it is an event to run across anything fresh ; but I told an interviewer that after seeing the Chauve-Souris I came out of the Theatre Femina feeling ashamed. With all my resources, with all the money I had spent, how poor were my achievements in comparison with this brilliant and colourful show, so cheaply mounted, yet with such superb effect.

To prepare the bringing of these clever Russians to London I sent out broadcast a very beautiful illustrated booklet which, in itself, became almost town talk before the appearance of the troupe. The fame of the Chauve-Souris had reached London from Paris, and expectancy ran very high. Quite against precedent, writers on theatrical matters *predicted* success. Nearly all the Paris correspondents of the London papers sent glowing accounts. Sisley Huddleston, for instance, wrote to the *Daily Mirror* : " In my opinion, after a fairly large experience of the Paris stage, it is the most original and most delightful entertainment that has ever come to the British Capital by way of the Gay City."

On the opening night at the London Pavilion, 2nd September, the Chauve-Souris drew a splendid house—£637. Although the reception was enthusiastic—for some of the items vociferous—the opinion as to the merits of the performance as a whole were mixed. A certain Bond Street tailor-novelist considered it a " very ordinary cabaret show which might amuse a late half hour, but not an evening." Mr. Hastings Turner sat in a box with me. When at the end of the evening he told me he thought it very clever, but that he couldn't fully appreciate it as he " did not understand Russian," I knew my big hopes were not to be fulfilled. It had never occurred to me that knowledge of the Russian language was necessary to appreciate this deliciously comic, original, and subtle entertainment. The Chauve-Souris was one of my big disappointments. I had expected it to storm London. I thought it might stay a year, and make a fortune. As it was, we did only a moderate business and barely paid our way. True, the show gathered round it a faithful band of enthusiasts ; one saw the same faces in the theatre night after night. But it did not take the town ; after the first two weeks it was obvious that it was not attractive enough to fill the Pavilion. At the end of six weeks I moved the Chauve-Souris to the Apollo, to try it there for a further four weeks' season.

Nikita Balieff, the founder and Grand Mogul of the show, was himself a hit. His English was very limited, and he got a great deal of humour out of this fact. He used two phrases continuously with great effect—" Zat's all " and " It's very seemple." His explosive manner also amused people, and sometimes he would raise laughter by back-chat in Russian with some member of the audience.

The critics were as divided in their opinion as the public. One thought it was " the best show seen in London since the war mixed all our memories up." Another described it as " an entertainment more novel and, perhaps, more artistic than anything seen on the London stage since Nijinsky and Pavlova first delighted the town."

Mr. George Morrison of the *Morning Post* found "little new." Mr. Carroll in the *Sunday Times* said, "the much-heralded, loud-betrumpeted company of Russian artists, calling themselves The Theatre de la Chauve-Souris, proves to be little more than a glorified cabaret series of short turns, not all of which are novel, artistic, or stimulating." A musical critic said, "If any native singers had sung so much out of tune they would have been severely hauled over the coals."

On the last night of their engagement at the Apollo I was in a box with Mr. George M. Cohan, and Balieff brought the whole company down to the front of the stage, where they turned towards me singing an improvised chorus in Russian. The only words I could recognise were "Charlie Cochran" repeated several times with great gusto, and with much waving of hands towards me. It was a pretty compliment. But something I appreciated much more was an incident one night when Ellen Terry was at the Pavilion. Balieff, advancing to the front of the stage, told the audience that this beloved actress was in the audience—and he proceeded to clap energetically. The audience did the same, and Miss Terry rose in her box and made a graceful bow, first to Mr. Balieff and then to the audience. The sentiment in the house was delightful. Another visitor who drew, perhaps, more attention to himself than the show on the stage was Charlie Chaplin. To get a good view of Chaplin, many members of the audience climbed over the backs of their seats.

Balieff made up for the comparative failure in England by a triumph when he went to America under the management of my old friend, Morris Gest, to whom I supplied copies of my booklet and other preliminary advertising matter for the advance campaign which he launched in New York. Balieff did not think much of us as an artistic nation. He said that "bacon—particularly with eggs—will always be more popular in England than Shakespeare!"

On 17th October I produced *Fun of the Fayre* at the

London Pavilion. Evelyn Laye, June, Irene Brown, Marie Wright, the exquisite Joan Clarkson, Trini, Alfred Lester, Morris Harvey, Clifton Webb, Walter Williams, Arthur Roberts, Geoffrey Gwyther, Robert Quinault, Mitty and Tillio, the Gomez Trio, and Les Fratellini were in the cast. The critic of the *Daily Mail* said, " Mr. Cochran has, I think, gone one better than in the *League of Notions*. He has the master-hand in revue. He has a faculty which amounts to genius. He does not imitate ; he introduces and institutes." With only seven performances, the first week our takings were £3364. In the fourth week they beat previous Pavilion records by reaching £3973, 6s., after deducting library discount ; they averaged £3500 up to the spring.

Looking back, I feel that this revue came nearest to my own standard of what such an entertainment should be for an intelligent public. There were few parts of it that I really disliked ; and in most of my own productions there have been scenes which have become intolerable to me after the first performance. It was in *Fun of the Fayre* that June made her first real impression upon the public —in a duet she sang with Clifton Webb, which was called " Whose Baby Are You ? " I promised her that she should have the leading part in my next production. Earlier in the revue, in the " Mirror of Beauty " scene, she did an Oriental dance with Robert Quinault, and was most attractive. It was in the " Mirror of Beauty " scene that I introduced the beautiful Joan Clarkson as the English Rose, the dashing Miss Juliette Compton as Miss Chicago, and Trini " the most beautiful girl in the world."

I will admit that I felt nervous about Trini's first appearance at the Pavilion. She had to live up to the description I had given of her. I had called her " the most beautiful girl in the world " in all sincerity, never anticipating that the phrase would catch on as it did. I had refused to allow her to be photographed, as I knew no camera would do justice to her lovely smile. She was in any case a little barbarian, and could not, and would

JOAN CLARKSON

"The beautiful English rose."

not try to pose. She could not be still before a camera for a second. I had taken her several times to theatres, always heavily veiled. I think everybody in the house had heard of Trini, but few had seen her.

Following, as she did, in the Parade of Beauty, such exquisite girls of different types as June, Juliette Compton, and Joan Clarkson, it was an enormous relief to me when on that first appearance the whole house applauded.

In the latter part of the revue, those who understood saw that Trini could do more than look beautiful. She danced a "Farrucha Torero," and it was superb. A writer in a high-class weekly described it as being "worth the whole show put together." It was an epitome of rhythm. Her dress, her body, the whole of her were at one with the alluring movement of her hips. She was sensuous, but not sensual. She did not excite desire; she made one gasp from sheer beauty.

Of one scene in *Fun of the Fayre* I was particularly proud, the Venetian scene. Although one critic declared "that any reader of Casanova, with a dancing master and a costumier to help him, could have given Mr. Cochran a better impression of Venice," I had the satisfaction of receiving the highest of praise from Mr. McEvoy, the artist, in that he came many times especially to see it. The scene was reproduced in colours in eleven different art journals in various capitals from photographs supplied by me upon editorial request. It was reproduced on the stage in Vienna and in Budapest. My scrap-book contains nearly a column of praise from Mr. P. G. Konody, beside in the aggregate many columns from other art critics. Jean Gabriel Domergue had spent several weeks with me designing this and other scenes for the revue. Many of them were designed and redesigned six or seven times before they were finally passed. If we failed, it was not from lack of care.

There was also an Early Victorian scene, of which one "Quex" in the *Evening News* said, "had a charm that made one glad the theatre is still our chief artistic medium, and

grateful that we possess producers who are sincere in their efforts." Yet *Fun of the Fayre* was not a costly production.

The dancers, Mitty and Tillio, made the house sit up. Their contract with me was for £60 a week. Since then Mr. Ziegfield has given them five times that amount for appearing with his famous Follies.

A bitter blow to me was the hostile reception of the Fratellini. For many years I had watched these inimitable drolls. I had seen them in France, in Germany, and in Belgium. At the time I engaged them, they were a stock feature at the Cirque Medrano in Paris. At the dress rehearsal, about 2 a.m., the company saw them go through their performance for the first time. They rocked with laughter. Nothing can follow them, was the unanimous comment.

But on the first night they were hissed. The show ran late ; not a crime on a first night—it used to be a regular and recognised thing at Drury Lane and the Hippodrome ; but whenever I have run past eleven o'clock I have been in hot water. The Pavilion stage is very small. The Fratellini, who use a ton of props for their simple but generally effective humour, could not readily get at their material as it was required— in the muddle of a first night it had got shifted from where they had put it, and entrances and exits that they needed were blocked up. In short, things did not run smoothly for them.

I had warned the member of the trio who wears the white face of the clown to get quickly to the funny business. Instead, he prolonged those opening remarks of his in broken English. The audience got restive. Somebody in the pit called out " German ! " Others took it up. There was a buzz, which the poor clown mistook for applause, and instead of shortening he elaborated his business. The noise got worse ; it began to look as if the show would be wrecked. Fortunately, as the last scene was a circus, I had arranged as a surprise for the Dolly Sisters, then appearing in the *League of Notions*, to come over from the Oxford and do their pony trot with Clifton Webb in the

finale. And once more I was indebted to the Dolly Sisters for saving a situation. The house cheered, and all ended happily, although next day the majority of the newspapers gave more space to the booing of the Fratellini than they did to the revue.

The next day the Fratellini begged to be released from their contract and to return to Paris, where they were loved. They were heart-broken. Each of the brothers brought his family to London. At rehearsals the Pavilion was literally swarming with Fratellini. The whole company felt for them. Their worth was recognised, at any rate, behind the footlights. I begged them not to go; I said I would release them if they insisted, but I wanted them to stay and make good. And they did. It would have been poor showmanship to include the scene that caused the tumult on the opening night. Everybody would come looking for it, and thus it would start with a handicap. But in a few weeks I gave the Fratellini more to do in other parts of the revue. I also used them later on in my pantomime at the Oxford. In the Venetian scene in *Fun of the Fayre* their miming was exquisite, but did not make for individual success so much as contributing to the perfection of the ensemble. Gemier, the great French actor, said, when I took the Fratellini to London, "Since Footit is dead, and the Fratellini have gone to England, I have seen only tragedies which can make me laugh." To Pierre Mariel's *Histoire de Trois Clowns*, Jacques Copeau has written a preface overflowing with admiration for these artists. At the end of the book are tributes innumerable from the best known men of letters and artists of France. Let me say that in my experience I have never known more conscientious artists than these simple Italian clowns, who now have the satisfaction of having all Paris at their feet, and were recently rewarded with the Palmes Academique. Mr. E. V. Lucas wrote a delightful article about them only a few weeks ago.

In Paris, recently, I went to see the Fratellini at the

Cirque d'Hiver. The building was full. I secured a *strapontin*, from which I watched the Fratellini convulse the house with laughter for over an hour. In that time they did not do one thing that was not worthy of a great artist. They employed simple means with the most perfect technique. At the conclusion they brought on their children, each one playing an instrument, and each brother brought on his smallest child made up in exact duplication of the father. The house went wild.

The music of this family jazz band compared favourably with the playing of any such band that I have ever heard, for the Fratellini never attempt anything without doing it perfectly. Young Victor, who was most excellent in *Fun of the Fayre* as an Arabian Nights' Charlie Chaplin in the scene designed and staged by Stowitts the dancer, learnt the water-whistle while in London from a boy who played it in one of my shows at the Oxford ; when I saw him in Paris he easily surpassed his teacher.

What a reception the troupe gave my wife and myself in their suite of dressing-rooms at the Cirque d'Hiver! They have a *salon* with Louis XVI. furniture and appointments worthy of the Comédie Française. On the walls are prints and pictures of various clowns—Grimaldi, Footit, and others. Going from the *salon* into the dressing-rooms, one was encountered by myriads of Fratellini, all helping father and uncle to undress. Meanwhile Paolo—Uncle Paul, as he is generally called—entertained us and the fashionable and artistic folk who are always to be found in the Fratellini loge after a performance. These good folks are, I am happy to say, reaping worldly reward as well as fame.

For my "Mirror of Beauty" scene, I had engaged, as "the Pearl of the Orient," Tikanowa, a very beautiful woman—Polish or Russian. She had little talent, and I did not expect her to do much. When she came to London she first saw my *League of Notions*, and was contemptuous about it. It was the night on which Paul Poiret was in another box, and was raving over its beauties. At re-

hearsals I found I was in for a packet of trouble. Tikanowa said she was a *première danseuse*, yet here was I deliberately insulting her by confining her to the one scene. I told her it was all I engaged her for, and all that I could give her to do—and, in fact, Robert Quinault was complaining to me that he had to dance with her in this one scene. He found her difficult to teach.

Daily she complained. When it came to trying on the costume she was to wear she tore it to shreds. At the dress rehearsal she refused to dress, and I told her that she would either wear what had been provided for her or not come to the theatre. While I was busy watching the rehearsal she came behind me and began to nag ; and this time I lost my temper, and told her to leave the theatre and not return.

At the next dress rehearsal she was there again, and I reprimanded Bert, the stage doorkeeper, for letting her in. He excused himself by saying that there were so many foreigners in the cast he couldn't tell one from the other. I impressed upon him that he was not to let Tikanowa in again, and then went up to the wardrobe for a few minutes. When I came back to the auditorium I found that there had been some exciting moments. Bert, who was rather deaf, had misunderstood my instructions. He thought I had told him to eject the lady immediately, and, despite all her protests, he had done so.

I expected a lawyer's letter ; but Tikanowa left London and did not communicate with me again. A friend of mine met her in Vienna afterwards. Her version of what had occurred was that she could not possibly stay at the Pavilion. She had known theatres in France, Spain, Russia, and other European countries where there were disgraceful happenings ; but the London Pavilion was a veritable sink of iniquity. The director, Cochran, had no fewer than three mistresses, all dancers, in *Fun of the Fayre*, so obviously there was no chance for her to show her talent, and she had thrown up her engagement despite all my overtures and protests.

Some time afterwards I was in Paris, and at the Casino de Paris I found her sitting in an open loge next to me. The following night I was again in the next box to her at the Theatre Michel; also the next night I met her at the Acacias, where Jennie Dolly was dancing with Clifton Webb. Through the medium of Jennie Dolly, Tikanowa and myself shook hands.

When she began her engagement in *Fun of the Fayre*, Trini had a little shrine in her dressing-room before which she knelt every night before going on the stage. On the shrine was a picture of the saint of Trini's particular church, the Lord of Great Power, also a photograph of Chicuelo, the *Torero*. As the revue went on, the portrait of Chicuelo disappeared and was replaced by one of an actor in the revue. All this time, let it be said, Madame Ramos, her mother, was always with Trini at the theatre and never, I think, left her during the day.

Meanwhile Trini was taking English lessons and making progress. Before the end of the revue she sang one verse of a song in English with Walter Williams. The mistake she made one night in singing, " Septober, Octember " was retained as a bit of business, and always got a laugh.

One night, when Trini had been in London some months, I arrived at the Pavilion to find Mother Ramos in a state of distress. Trini had left the boarding-house where the family stayed, and her mother did not know her address.

I was afraid that Trini would not arrive at the theatre, but she did, and immediately asked to see me. She explained that there had been such rows between herself and her mother at the boarding-house that a young man, one of the boarders, had interfered and had found another boarding-house for her, and she was staying there. The young man wanted to marry her, but she was not inclined to marry, at any rate not until her three years' contract with me had ended. But her mind was made up on one point—she would not return to her mother and, unless her mother went back to Spain, she would not work again. She loved her mother, but she could not do her work and

endure the violent scenes which took place almost daily. Trini's account of the affair was borne out by the Spanish-English companion I had engaged for her.

The young man who wanted to marry her proved to be a commercial traveller. His photograph had now replaced that of the actor on Trini's shrine.

Trini promised to come to the theatre every night if I would arrange to let her in and out through a side door. I arranged for an escort for her, pending some settlement with her mother. So nightly my manager, Mr. Thorburn, had scouts round the house to see that the coast was clear, and as there are several doors at the Pavilion, Trini went on eluding her pursuers, although her mother had many recruits from the Spanish colony assisting her.

I liked Trini's mother. She was a good soul, and, if she beat and reviled her child, she only did what other Spanish mothers of her class thought was the proper thing. The language used to Trini by her fond parent, when translated into English, did seem somewhat callous, but my friend Morales assured me they were honied words compared to what Trini must have heard from her childhood upward in the Calle Torres.

My interviews with the mother were painful. She was always in tears. She told me she had sent for her husband ; her son had already arrived as advance guard of the male members of the family.

The father wrote me a charming letter, in which he deplored the weakness of women, and assured me he did not doubt that if we could meet as men of the world all would be amicably settled. He had a high regard for me, he said, and suggested that we should meet in Paris and discuss the matter over a bottle of wine. The tenor of his letter suggested that he did not see me entirely in the light of an impresario.

Night after night the Spanish faction attempted to rush the Pavilion stage door. Trini remained calm, and went regularly to her boarding-house. The relatives of the young commercial traveller came to see me. They

were nice people, and Trini frequently stayed at their house.

My wife had a curious experience when she went one day with Trini to see the Spanish Consul, a delightful old gentleman, who assured me that in his many years of residence in London his peace had never been so disturbed as by the Ramos family. Trini and Mrs. Cochran were driving off, when a young man's head appeared at the window of the car. My wife called out in alarm, but Trini got up and gave the young man a good push, and he fell into the street.

"Don't be alarmed," she said to my wife; "it's only my brother. He won't be hurt."

Ultimately the father arrived, and after several consultations it was agreed that the family should return home, and that Trini would send them a weekly allowance. This arrangement was carried out, and peace ensued.

In the variety programme which followed *Fun of the Fayre* at the Pavilion, Trini sang an English song and danced in the English style. She appeared most successfully in the *Midnight Follies*, at the Trocadero and at the Kensington Palace Hotel. Mr. Shubert arranged with me to give her the leading rôle in a musical play at the Winter Garden, New York, and she became highly popular in America. While there she formed some attachment, and I released her from her contract with me. She is now a very successful artiste, and has fully realised all my hopes.

CHAPTER XXXI

My Variety Programme at the London Pavilion—The Duncan Sisters and the "By Appointment" Puzzle—The Oxford Pantomime that cost me £7000—A Paragraph by "Quex" that earned a New Contract for Miss José Collins—Lord Northcliffe interests Himself in *The Man in Dress Clothes*—A Daring Remark by Seymour Hicks—Memorable First-Night Audience for *Mayfair and Montmartre*—"The Singing Duck"—The Box-Office Mystery of *Mayfair and Montmartre*—Careful Revision—Crisis seems to pass—Then Delysia drops out of the Cast—Receipts go down £1800 in a Week—A Success with *Chuckles*—Lucien Guitry's Opinion of Bobby Clark—*Phi-Phi* Difficulties—June as Leading Lady—I think again about the Critics.

AFTER *Fun of the Fayre* I tried a variety season as a stop-gap at the London Pavilion, with the Duncan Sisters as the chief attraction. But it was a very hot June, and the weather was altogether too delightful for good *matinée* business, without which I could not make the season profitable at the cheaper variety prices. The night business was splendid all through; but I found what a bugbear a fine summer can be to entertainment providers. I tried to make my programme one of real variety, and to stage it in an attractive manner. Judging from the following criticism in the *Weekly Dispatch*, and others written in the same strain, I succeeded. Said the *Weekly Dispatch*:

> "The secret of the success at the Pavilion seems to lie in the artistic manner in which each 'turn' is put on the stage—the effective backgrounds employed—and in the selection of the acts. There are no performers with material that audiences have had to put up with for years and got heartily sick of, and none of those painfully refined items which, however

clever they may be in themselves, suffer from the damning sin of conventionality."

Child impersonators do not appeal to every one; but the popularity of the Duncan Sisters is undoubted. They are quaint little persons. When they reached London they went up Regent Street to do some shopping. Something in Jays' window attracted them. They were about to go in, when they noticed the sign "By Appointment" outside the shop. They didn't go in, and they were surprised to see the same words over other shops. When they got to the theatre they asked why in this country it was necessary to make an appointment to buy a packet of pins or a yard of ribbon? They were quite serious, and not a little bewildered.

I came upon them in Chicago in November 1923, in a play called *Topsy and Eva*, a musical comedy version of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. It was a strange concoction, and Edward Knoblock and I sat it out amazed. But it was doing the outstanding business of all the Chicago theatres, and I saw from a Chicago paper a year later that it was still running to capacity business. One of the Duncan girls blacked up as Topsy, and gave a clever performance, and both of them seemed to please their audiences hugely. *Topsy and Eva* must have been one of the freaks of the theatrical business. By all the rules, it shouldn't run a week, but it made a fortune for those who produced it. One attractive feature about the piece was the chorus. All the girls had been engaged in California by means of an advertisement asking for young women who had never been on the stage before. They were an exquisitely pretty bunch, and they danced well, with just the restraint that suggested a well-produced girls' high-school breaking-up entertainment. Each girl was accompanied by a mother, a governess, or a chaperon of some kind.

Just as my *League of Notions* at the Oxford caused the business of *London, Paris, and New York* at the Pavilion to drop, so in turn had *Fun of the Fayre* at the Pavilion

done damage to the run of the *League of Notions*. The drop in receipts amounted to several hundred pounds a week, and at Christmas I took off the *League of Notions*, and produced my first and only pantomime, *Babes in the Wood*. I had the Dolly Sisters as "the Babes," George Hassel and Tubby Edlin as "the Robbers," and that fine comedian, A. W. Baskcomb, as Louise, the Babes' governess. Nellie Taylor was the principal boy, Robin Hood, and Joyce Barbour the principal girl, Maid Marion. Doris Patston was the Fairy Queen, and the Fratellini Troupe were a delight with their comic elephant and their splendid flying trap work in the Baron's haunted bedroom.

The Dolly Sisters in their duet, "Keep on Humming," acted with an artistry that brought tears to the eyes of many a grown-up; in the dim light they sang and sang and then, pathetically tired, sank down to sleep. Perhaps the scene was too realistic for the children. Not long ago Mr. James Agate, noting in my room a photograph of the Dolly Sisters, recalled the performance of Jennie, who played the boy babe. "I have never seen a more beautiful piece of acting than that which she gave in the duet," he said.

Jennie Dolly, though hampered by a slight foreign accent, has great potentialities as an actress. Once, after watching her at rehearsal, Hastings Turner said, "I don't know many actresses who could do that. She can throw her dancing shoes away at any time."

The *Daily Mail* critic wrote about the *Babes in the Wood*, "This version of *The Babes in the Wood*—and my memory goes back to the early days of Dan Leno and Herbert Campbell at Drury Lane—is the best pantomime I have seen. It is so good that not even with revue has Mr. Cochran staged anything finer."

Messrs. Keith Prowse had made a substantial deal before the production, and after seeing the first performance, Mr. Herbert Smith, the managing director of the firm, increased his deal by upwards of one hundred seats per performance. But the *Babes in the Wood* ran only

a few weeks. Our receipts for the first full week from Boxing Day were £4887, 10s.; the next week £4182, 15s.; then £3935; and the last week £2995.

Every day the *matinée* receipts were so much higher than the takings for the night performances that it was obvious I was in for a serious loss if I continued the pantomime after the school holidays were over, so I withdrew it on Saturday, 21st January. Even then my loss on the run was £7378, notwithstanding that I had used a good deal of old scenery and dresses for the production. That the *Nation and Athenæum* should write of my only pantomime that "all the ancient elements were transmuted by the new spirit, and the new spirit is delicate, tender, witful even, to a degree that would have seemed incredible only ten years ago," makes remembrance of the venture almost worth while.

"The *Babes in the Wood* is the best pantomime in the whole of our experience," went on the *Nation*. "It has a good deal that is traditional in it, but the tradition has been deftly purged and refurbished. Scenes like the Robbers' Wood and the Toy Ballet have a simplicity worthy of the grand old ballad into which they are woven."

£7000 is a lot of money to lose. But such words from the *Nation*!

The Miss Doris Patston, who so daintily played the "Fairy Queen" in the *Babes in the Wood*, is the young English girl who, in November 1924, went off to America to play in a new musical comedy written by Mr. Arthur Wimperis for Mr. Flo Ziegfield of the "Ziegfield Follies." I was always certain that she would develop. She first played for me in *Cherry*, and has been more or less under my wing ever since. When *Little Nelly Kelly* ended its run I tried to get her an engagement, but the London managers all seemed "shy" of her.

One day Mr. William Pollock, who was concerned with Mr. Archie de Bear in the "Five O'clock Follies" at the Princes Restaurant, asked me to recommend a clever girl. I recommended Miss Patston, and she was engaged to

appear at the Follies, and later at the Duke of York's in a revue at a small joint salary for the two appearances. The salary was so small it was regarded only as a provisional engagement. Then I convinced my friend, Archie Selwyn, of her worth, and he engaged her for New York at 200 dollars a week, which was about three times what she was getting for playing in the Princes cabaret show and at the Duke of York's. No sooner had I done this than three West End managers endeavoured to secure her for " lead." Each manager had refused her at a small salary a few weeks previously. The manager with whom she was playing offered her as much to stay in London as she was to get in New York.

Meanwhile, Mr. Selwyn had spoken about her to Mr. Flo Ziegfield, and he cabled asking me if I thought she was capable of playing " lead " in a musical comedy. I told him that were I producing a musical comedy of the *Sally* type I would rather have her than any young English actress. This resulted in the engagement which took Miss Patston to New York, to create a leading part in the musical comedy written by Arthur Wimperis. The arrangement with Wimperis was made also on my recommendation.

I tell this story because it is my experience that managers often show a sheeplike tendency in regard to artists. I can quote an experience, quite an amusing one, which concerns Miss José Collins, and how unexpectedly she received a substantial increase of salary.

One night—it was at a time when revues were running at the Palace, Oxford, Pavilion, Hippodrome, Empire, and Alhambra, and competition for leading artists was keen—Seymour Hicks and my friend, Captain G. H. F. Nichols (" Quex " of the *Evening News*), were dining with me at Aldford Street, and we talked about the particular qualities of various leading ladies. The name of Miss Shirley Kellogg came up, and I mentioned that I thought of engaging Miss Kellogg for a revue which I was about to produce at the New Oxford. I said that in my opinion

no one had ever led "production numbers" with the gaiety and grip that Shirley Kellogg showed in the early de Courville revues at the Hippodrome.

Captain Nichols wrote a paragraph in his column in the *Evening News* as a result of this conversation. He did not mention names, but he said that possibly a very well-known performer in musical productions might break an old association and appear under Mr. Cochran's management.

A day or so afterwards I met Lord Robert Innes-Kerr and his wife, Miss José Collins, and they told me how "Quex's" paragraph had resulted in a sort of board meeting at Daly's, and much benefit to Miss Collins. As can be imagined, they thanked me, and we all had a laugh when I told them that Miss Shirley Kellogg was the artist really indicated in the *Evening News*. It seems that Mr. James White, who had not long assumed command at Daly's, read "Quex's" paragraph, and took it to refer to Miss Collins, who was the "star of stars" at Daly's. When he sent for Miss Collins, and asked if she were not satisfied with the salary she was receiving, she did not at first understand the drift of his inquiries. But she is a clever woman, and she came away from that meeting with a new contract at an increased salary.

The *Babes in the Wood* had failed; but I had my other theatres to think of. There was the Garrick Theatre, for instance.

Now David Belasco and myself while in Paris had seen a play by André Picard and Yves Mirande, which was called *L'Homme en Habit*. We liked it, and secured the English and American rights. We recognised that we should have difficulty in adapting the last act, which took place in the vestibule of a theatre, where the hero had obtained employment as a Controleur, a calling that happily has no counterpart in the theatre-world of London. The odd desk at which the three bearded men sit and annoy would-be ticket purchasers would not be understood here, so a new environment had to be found. I got

Seymour Hicks to adapt the play, and he made a splendid job of the first two acts, but when he came to the last act, the "actor" got the better of the "dramatist." Hicks had seen, admired, and often talked to me about Mansfield's *Beau Brummel*, and was most keen on the death scene with its imaginary banquet in the Calais garret. He put this bodily into *The Man in Dress Clothes*, which was the title we gave to the adaptation of *L'Homme en Habit*. It was produced at the Garrick Theatre in March 1922.

The first two acts went with a bang, and Seymour, who took the leading part, never acted better; but the last act didn't match the other two. It was cloth of another kind. The majority of the audience felt like Mr. Walkley, who liked Mr. Hicks "better in the lightness of heart than in his *tremolo* of sentiment." He found that "the note was prolonged in solemn *semibreves* and the *tempo* was too slow —probably to emphasise the contrast with the rapid *staccato* of his fun." Mr. James Agate described this last scene as being "as little related to the play as is the cadenza of the virtuoso to the concerto. Both are intended to show what the performer can do." Seymour, in fact, was out to show his audience that he could make them cry as well as laugh; but his treatment spoiled the play.

The dramatic critics were almost unanimous in giving Seymour Hicks full credit for his splendid performance. Again it proved him, they said, to be one of the very best of our English actors. For some weeks the play ran to receipts of from £1100 to as high as £1600. Then the takings fell back to £1300.

Then once more Lord Northcliffe came to the help of an enterprise in which I was concerned. This time, however, it was not because of me, but rather in spite of my association with the play. This is what happened.

Mr. Max Pemberton, from whose lips I have the story, had gone to see Lord Northcliffe, who had returned after an absence abroad; and Mr. Pemberton was telling him all the news of the town, among other things that Seymour

Hicks was giving a fine performance in a most amusing play, but that it was not doing too well.

"Hicks?" asked Lord Northcliffe; "is that the nice, amusing man you once brought to see me?"

Mr. Pemberton replied that that was a correct description of Seymour Hicks, and Lord Northcliffe there and then promised to see the play.

He came to a *matinée*, and was received by my business manager, Mr. Charlie Williams, who conducted him to a box. "You must sit with me and explain things, as I don't often go to a theatre," said Lord Northcliffe. Williams did so during part of the play, and then, at his lordship's wish, took him to see Seymour Hicks during one of the intervals.

Lord Northcliffe saw the last part of the play sitting on a chair in the wings, and evidently enjoyed it. He promised Seymour Hicks that another notice of the play should be done in each of his papers. Hicks, quick as a flash, took advantage of the situation that presented itself, and replied, "I am most grateful, but my manager doesn't believe in the press" (a statement which, of course, was quite untrue).

"He doesn't!" replied Lord Northcliffe. "Who is he?" Hicks told him. "Very well, then," said Lord Northcliffe, "I'll show him."

Immediately Carmelite House began to talk about the merits of the play, the receipts rose. From £1377 we jumped to as high as £1774 in one week. But after about six weeks the receipts again began to dwindle, and I withdrew the play, which had had a seven months' run, in the middle of October. Had the last act been as good as the first two *The Man in Dress Clothes* unquestionably might have run for a year or more, even without the Northcliffe boom.

I come now to what I shall always regard as my most ambitious and, when all is said and done, my most disappointing stage venture, *Mayfair and Montmartre*.

"By far the most splendid revue even Cochran has given us," wrote Mr. Hannen Swaffer the day after it was

put on at the New Oxford Theatre. "In a Boccaccio scene," he wrote, "Florentine wonders had been conjured up; the Middle Ages had come to life again. Beautiful women had worn costumes of peacock-like splendour—costumes which made one live again in a southern sun, costumes of shapes so grotesque, of colours so extravagant, that the eye ached with staring." Of the Inca Ballet, he said, "The Russian Ballet has never staged a scene so wonderful."

The day afterwards Mr. Swaffer had an article condemning the revue as vigorously as he had praised it. This attack he kept up for several days; he continued it in the Sunday paper for which he wrote.

The *Manchester Guardian* said "It is a gigantic essay in the Grand Babylonian manner, with brilliant flashes of colour and occasional brilliant flashes of wit," ran its notice. "The staging, the ballets, the mannequins, the tumblers, the whole mad masquerade revealed an astonishing mastery of finished flamboyancy. Mr. Cochran's command of showmanship is as assured as ever." Apart from these flattering comments and equally rapturous praise from Mr. Philip Page, no other critic had a good word to say for the revue the day after production.

Expectation had run high, for Delysia was to return to the London stage after a long absence in the United States. I returned over £1100 in cheques sent for first-night tickets. The first-night audience included the Grand Duke Michael and Countess Torby, Lord and Lady Ednam, Prince Obelensky, Lady Diana Duff-Cooper, Lord and Lady Maidstone, Major Peter Coombe and his wife, Lady Moira Coombe, Mrs. Dudley Ward, the Hon. Louis Sturt, the Hon. Maurice Baring, Mr. T. P. O'Connor, Sir Philip Sassoon, Sir Thomas Beecham, Lord Wodehouse, Miss Ellaline Terris, Mr. Robert Loraine, and other theatrical celebrities; Lord and Lady Howard de Walden—in short, it was a gathering seen seldom in any playhouse other than Covent Garden on a big night.

The second part of the revue began with a scene in which some imaginary critics discussed the first act. They

used the clichés often employed in criticism of revue. The skit seemed to me harmless enough, and I thought it would be taken as amusing. No actor was made-up to represent any known critic. No particular individual was represented. But to my surprise the scene gave offence. Most of the critics slated this episode and "The Singing Duck," which seemed to cause almost as much annoyance. Why, I have never been able to understand. Many of the criticisms contained actual misstatements. One writer said that the revue was an hour and a half too long. The official time-sheets, which I have before me as I write, show that the curtain rose at 8.26 and went down at 11.32. This was unquestionably half an hour too long; but not a grave fault for a big production on a first night. One criticism was headed: "'Singing Duck' hissed off the stage." There were hisses, I ascertained when I made inquiries after reading this notice, but they were so few that sitting in the stage box I did not hear them. As Mr. Walkley said of the "Singing Duck," in an article which he wrote a week or so after the production: "It certainly amused many people on the first night, though it did not happen to amuse me." The "Singing Duck" was, I thought, a joke, and when the revue was cut so that the "Duck" appeared earlier in the evening, it remained, if one may judge by applause and laughter, one of the popular items of the entertainment. Some of the critics appeared to take umbrage because the "Duck" did not, as I promised before production it would, give us coloratura trills. One paper stated with seriousness that "the much-heralded 'Singing Duck' did not sing at all, but merely quacked in *perfect rhythm*."

Delysia had caught a bad cold in America, and would have taken a long rest had I not begged her to help me out by appearing in *Mayfair and Montmartre*, for I was in need of a star. It was only to oblige me that she consented to take the part, and it was evident at rehearsals that her voice needed a rest. A few days before the date announced for production her throat

specialist urged me to send her for a week to the seaside. That was why I postponed the production. When we opened she was still hoarse, and I know now that I made a grave error in persuading her to work. But Delysia is a woman of marvellous spirit. Notwithstanding disability, she gave a brilliant performance on the first night.

I was by no means depending upon one artist. Look at the names in the cast of *Mayfair and Montmartre*: Lady Tree, Nellie Taylor, Anita Elson, Joyce Barbour, Nikitina, Mabel Green, A. W. Baskcomb, George Hassell, Tubby Edlin, Stowitts, and George Bishop!

But, despite the amazing demand for the first night, and advance booking of nearly £400 for the second night, the box-office business stood still after the night of production—so vigorous was the press chorus of damnation. The production was the most expensive of all my productions. I realised that I was threatened with ruin. I saw the show on the second night from beginning to end. I watched it again on the first Saturday night when we played to receipts of over £600—practically all advance booking. The audience laughed and applauded just where I had expected them to do so. One scene on a dining car, which the majority of critics told me to delete, went to more laughter than any of my comedy scenes in revue, except, perhaps, a somewhat similar scene on a tube train in *Half-Past Eight* at the Comedy Theatre. The beautiful scenes which, later on, had lavish praise accorded them in the best weeklies and in the art journals, went almost unnoticed. How could one account for my old friend, Sidney Dark, writing that there was "nothing pretty in a row of bare female backs"? Has the critic a dual personality? Does he admire as a man what he condemns as a critic? Surely there is nothing more beautiful than the female form—and these particular backs had been chosen with very great care.

Still the box-office business remained at a standstill. The situation was serious. I wrote a long letter to the

newspapers. I was accused of losing my temper and of being childish. Actually, I was trying to save myself from the first step towards bankruptcy.

On the first Monday following production no new bookings were reported. But for advance sales of tickets we should have played to empty seats. On the Tuesday a controversy resulting from my letter to the press got well wound up. Columns were written concerning my threat to bar the critics from my future revues. Many of the critics were old friends of mine.

Honestly and sincerely I tried to dissect *Mayfair and Montmartre*; but, after making the alterations which a producer always expects to make after a first performance of a spectacle on such a stupendous scale, I could not find much that it seemed advisable to delete. I was ready to sacrifice any scene, any number which did not please the audience. Save for a political skit which went flat, and the curtailment of a scene or two which played too long, the revue appeared to give more pleasure to the audience than any of my revues.

Gradually the bookings began to grow. By the sixth week our receipts were very big indeed. Considered criticisms of the revue were now appearing in the weekly papers. Many cultured writers saw merit in it. Some of them took the first-night critics to task. As Miss Christopher St. John wrote, "Apparently you 'slate' as you 'marry in haste to repent at leisure,' for in some of the newspapers whose representatives said nasty things about *Mayfair and Montmartre* there have since appeared special articles by other representatives saying nice things. Mr. Walkley, in the *Times*, and Mr. Baughan, in the *Daily News*, have donned particularly white sheets in which to expiate the sins of their colleagues. The whole affair is puzzling." Miss St. John went on and referred to the general theory that "the critics were offended by Mr. Hastings Turner's jape in the revue at their expense." She expressed her opinion that I had raised "a popular form of entertainment, the variety show, the vaudeville,

the revue—call it what you will—to a level which has not been reached before in this country or in any other."

The crisis seemed to have passed. Bookings increased. I started to get my production outlay back at the rate of £1200 a week. Then came a culminating shock—Delysia's throat got worse. On Sunday, 14th May, she went to Paris to see the throat specialist who had always attended her. Next day I received this wire: "Am terribly sorry. By doctor's orders I am absolutely forbidden to use my voice or it will be lost for life. Am absolutely heart-broken. Will be back Wednesday. Explain to all."

It was a blow. When it became known that Delysia was out of the cast the receipts dropped first £100 and then as much as £200 a performance. By the Saturday we were no less than £700 short of our receipts of the preceding Saturday. We were busier at the box office re turning money than taking it in. The receipts from *Mayfair and Montmartre* during that week without Delysia were nearly £1800 less than they had previously been.

Miss Mabel Green stepped valiantly into the breach, and did the best she could in most trying circumstances. But the songs and scenes provided for Delysia were unsuitable for an English actress. It was not a question of comparative ability, but of difference of personality. The whole revue had been built around Delysia.

My losses on *Mayfair and Montmartre* grew and grew until they topped the £20,000 mark. I rang down the curtain on 20th May.

From time to time I had the satisfaction of seeing references to the beauties of *Mayfair and Montmartre* in criticisms of other spectacular productions. When *Decameron Nights* was done at Drury Lane Mr. James Agate said in the *Saturday Review* that, "There was more of Boccaccio in the single scene of Mr. Cochran's ballet at the New Oxford than in the whole of *Decameron Nights*." Mr. Walkley wrote in one of his Wednesday articles: "An eighteenth-century Versailles spectacle which I think for bizarre, Aubrey Beardsleyish beauty beats anything yet seen in

London." But in describing this scene as "from Paris" he did me an injustice: "It was home-made and British in design." Mr. Walkley gave Delysia credit for singing "J'en ai marre" better than Mistinguett; "what is more," he said, "she proves herself (listen to her delivery of but one line—'It makes me . . . sick'—and you will know) an absolutely incomparable *diseuse*." A long time after the withdrawal I heard Prince George describe *Mayfair and Montmartre* as the best show he had ever seen.

Commencing 12th June I ran a four weeks' Guitry Season at the Princes. It was even more successful than the first season at the Aldwych.

I was in a quandary about the Oxford, as I had anticipated a year's run for *Mayfair and Montmartre*. Jean Bedini, once a comic juggler, with an assistant known as Arthur, had written me many times about a burlesque show which he was running. It was called *Chuckles*, and rumour said that the company contained a particularly fine comedian. I had heard before of this comedian. When I was in America I had always just missed him. Once I was actually starting on a night journey to see him, when business prevented me from going. Just after the *Mayfair and Montmartre* disaster I met Albert de Courville, and asked him if he had seen *Chuckles*. He had, and he confirmed the report I had received from others regarding the comedian, who was called Bobby Clark. De Courville told me he was "a scream." I determined to take a gamble. I cabled and cabled, and in two or three days had settled to bring over *Chuckles of 1922*, lock, stock, and barrel. I paid the performers' fares, and guaranteed running expenses, including all salaries. After that the profits were to be divided.

I put on *Chuckles* at the Oxford. I instituted the policy of "Twice Daily" and seven-and-sixpenny stalls.

The so-called "burlesque" companies in America play a circuit of houses known as "burlesque houses," where the prices are cheap, and the audiences are 90 per cent. male. Most of the great comedians of America have

come from these " burlesque " theatres. In my young days in America the humour was of a character which would not be passed by the British censor ; and, apart from the comedians, the principal attraction was an array of beefy blondes in tights. One particularly successful " burlesque " went in for enormous women in tights. This show was called the *Beef Trust.* Of recent years the " burlesque houses " have been, as they say in America, " cleaned up," and the censorship instituted and carried out by " burlesque " managers themselves is more strict even than ours at St. James' Palace. There is a rigorous set of rules in every " burlesque " contract.

I issued a circular in which I pointed out that those who expected a show up to the level of my usual scale of production would be disappointed ; but I emphasised that I was introducing a comedian who was extremely funny in his own country. As humour is not international I realised that Bobby Clark might not make the British public laugh ; in that case I should have the biggest failure of my career. During the first five minutes of the dress rehearsal I was on tenterhooks : then Bobby Clark came on with his partner, McCullough. I knew immediately that the show would be all right so long as Clark appeared often enough. He did.

On the first night the audience started laughing at Clark, and never left off. He made the greatest success of any American comedian who has ever been to London. Bobby Clark's humour was of the direct kind that gets home with everybody. From the moment when he posed as a lion-tamer until the end, when he pranced about garbed as a woman acrobat, he had the house convulsed. He filled the Oxford through all the hot spell of that summer, from 19th June to 12th August.

Unfortunately, before he left America, he had signed with Irving Berlin and Sam Harris to appear in their *Music Box Revue.* It was to be his first chance on Broadway—the Mecca of every American actor. Heretofore his abilities had been confined to the cheaper houses where

they play twice daily, including Sundays. He was to escape from this, and to earn a very large salary indeed, so I could not hold him. Irving Berlin happened to be at the Oxford at the first performance of *Chuckles*. Had he any misgivings as to the suitability of Clark for Broadway they must have been removed. I asked Berlin to let Clark stay with me, but he said I could have McCullough, and he would pay his salary. Clark and McCullough started together as boys, and agreed to stick together ; and nowadays Clark will not accept an engagement without his partner, although the managers are prepared to give him the same salary as they pay for the two. If Clark could have stayed in London, *Chuckles* would have run for a year.

Bobby Clark's greatest admirers were the comedians. Leslie Henson saw him half a dozen times or more. The Guitrys, particularly Lucien, raved about him. Lucien spent a good many hours in Clark's dressing-room when he was not watching him from the front.

Alexander Woollcott, the New York dramatic critic, was at a luncheon-party at my house at which the Guitrys were present. The talk was of the French and American theatre. Woollcott spoke of the Comédie Française, the Vieux Colombier, the Theatre de l'Œuvre, and the plays of Claudel.

" You have great artists in America," said Lucien Guitry.

" Yes," replied Woollcott, and he mentioned the Barrymores, Pauline Lord, Emily Stephens, and others.

" I don't know them," said Guitry. " Do you know Bobby Clark ? "

Woollcott smiled. He thought Guitry was jesting.

" Surely you know him ? " went on Guitry ; and when Guitry put to him the direct question : " Did he not think Clark wonderful ? " Woollcott was frank in saying that he did not. He admitted he was mildly amusing.

The statement was translated to Sacha Guitry and Yvonne Printemps, and created astonishment. " How funny," they said, " an artist like Bobby Clark not re-

cognised in his own country!" Sacha even gave an imitation of Bobby Clark manipulating his cigar. Whenever I see the Guitrys they ask me about Bobby Clark. Sacha wanted to write a play for him. "That's a great actor," he kept on saying.

When *Phi-Phi* was produced in Paris it was offered to me, and I refused it. Christine, the composer, and I have many mutual friends, and they were anxious that I should have the first refusal. I liked the catchy songs; but the book by Albert Willmetz seemed to me impossible of adaptation for England. Some of his couplets were especially witty, but untranslatable. *Phi-Phi* had been running over a year when I dined with M. Bloch of the Société des Auteurs and some friends, and they once more took me to see the play. We had had a good dinner, and, perhaps, I was rather carried away by the tunes, which by now had become familiar. Rather weakly I sank my prejudices, and entered into a contract to produce *Phi-Phi* in London. Hastings Turner and Arthur Wimperis would not tackle the task of adaptation, so again I fell back upon Fred Thompson, this time in conjunction with Clifford Grey. Fred Thompson, who started off gaily, struck a snag, and he said he couldn't get on with the job. He had racked his brains; but had only one idea—and that was once more to write a musical comedy version of *Pink Dominoes*, which he had done already in *To-night's the Night*. He gave me the same story—almost the same dialogue—except that the private rooms in the restaurant became private rooms in a Roman bath.

The difficulty in adapting a French musical play is to get the English lyrics to fit the music. The English lyric writer generally wants his point to come at the end of a line. The French writer of couplets is more subtle; those of Bousquet, Rip, and Willmetz often sparkle from beginning to end. Songs popular in France are often popular here only as dance music; the English words fitted to the music are often inane. This was one of the difficulties with *Phi-Phi*. I got Edmund Dulac to design the produc-

tion, which was not costly; but I think I had better say outright that I could never get up any enthusiasm for the show. Christine's tunes were sparkling, and the performance of June was a charming one. My chief satisfaction was that I had fulfilled my promise to establish her as a musical comedy star. I felt all the time that *Phi-Phi* was a vulgar show. I hated to have it on the Pavilion stage where I had done things of which I was proud. Perhaps it was fortunate that *Phi-Phi* was my next musical production after *Mayfair and Montmartre* as, in carrying out my threat to exclude the dramatic critics, probably I did myself service. If they had said half what I thought about *Phi-Phi* myself, we might not have had the five months' run which it achieved.

In spite of my own opinion of *Phi-Phi*, the receipts for the first full week reached £2900, and we kept very near to these figures until the week commencing 18th September, when we did £3120. We again topped the £3000 mark in November, after which came a big drop. When I withdrew the piece on 9th December our business for the last week amounted to £1804, 11s.—figures which a good many theatres would be glad to reach. Business would have been big again from Christmas onwards; but both the comedians had to leave me for pantomime, and they were difficult to replace, so I arranged with Douglas Fairbanks to show his film *Robin Hood*, which for some time drew takings of over £2500 a week. Douglas and Mary are two of the most delightful people I have ever met, and Mary is as clever as she is beautiful, and as womanly as she is clever. And such a friend!

These figures prove that, even with my least successful show at the London Pavilion, I always did fairly well financially. Had I confined myself to producing shows at this house I could have remained in a very happy position.

I have referred once more to the critics. Let me say that the soreness I felt over *Mayfair and Montmartre* has long since passed away. Their attitude towards this play will always be a mystery to me; but I am sure I was wrong

OUR LABOUR EXCHANGE.

MR. C. B COCHRAN AS A CONSCIENTIOUS DRAMATIC CRITIC.

in attributing malicious motives. In the subsequent period of great worry and trouble I had no better friends than the dramatic critics. Their opinions often amaze me. Their outlook on life seems so different to that of the rest of the world.

CHAPTER XXXII

My Financial Losses by the End of 1922—I go to America to secure Plays that will restore my Fortunes—An Ambitious Programme that failed, except artistically—Weather Effect on Theatres—One Week I would make a Profit, the next be losing £2000—A Loss of £8000 on the *Music Box Revue*—Ups and Downs of *Partners Again*—The Sensational Production of *Anna Christie*—Receipts that dropped in Eleven Weeks from £2000 to £746—A Courteous Message from the Gallery—Miss Pauline Lord's Triumph—A Great Occasion at the Oxford—Duse and the Guitrys in One Week—Duse's Emotional Meeting with Ellen Terry—The Philosophy of Serge Diaghileff—The Coloured Revue at the Pavilion—How Florence Mills gripped an Audience—Two Wonderful Parties—Florence Mills in Russian Uniform—George M. Cohan puts the Cohan Spirit into *Little Nellie Kelly*—Its Success in Manchester—A Meeting of Creditors in the Autumn of 1923—A Year's Grace—I arrange the Rodeo for Wembley Stadium in 1924—Why I made no Profit—I am made Bankrupt—Charles Frohman and the Last Chip—Why I have Hope and Courage for the Future—The Amazing Generosity of Delysia and the Dolly Sisters—Great Kindness from America—Mr. A. E. Abrahams' Generous Help.

IN the late autumn of 1922 I again went to New York. My financial affairs were in a bad state owing to the succession of heavy losses I had sustained.

Although somehow or other my name is associated with American productions, I cannot recall one American play, with the exception of *Chuckles*, that up to this time I had produced in London. But now I was tired, and did not feel in the mood for making original productions. I determined to look over the ground in America, and to try and secure a parcel of plays that would restore my fortunes.

When I came back to England at the end of the year I announced that in the New Year I intended to produce *Partners Again*, *Anna Christie*, *So This is London!* *Dover Street to Dixie*, *Little Nelly Kelly*, and the *Music Box Revue*, besides having a Sacha Guitry Season at the New Oxford.

People in my own business flouted the idea that I could carry out the entire programme. But, unhappily, I did carry it out—and more besides. By June 1923 I had all the plays I have mentioned running, except *Little Nelly Kelly*, which I produced a few weeks later. But on top of the list I have given I had a series of Duse *matinées* at the New Oxford.

My expenses that June were £17,500 a week. It got very hot, and so sensitive are the theatres to weather conditions, that whereas one week I made a profit, the following week I lost no less than £2000 with the same plays.

I paid Irving Berlin 5000 dollars on account of royalties on the *Music Box Revue* before I actually saw it in Boston. Returning travellers from America had told me that it was a certainty for London. Well, after *Mayfair and Montmartre*, I was nervous about doing big productions of my own; so I bought the original New York production of the *Music Box Revue* which, when it had gone through the hands of my wardrobe mistress, Mrs. Fry—a perfect genius—was as good as new. I brought Mr. Hassard Short from New York to restage the revue, and two of his assistants Mr. Irving Berlin also came most generously at his own expense to supervise the musical arrangements and the general production. I also brought over for the rehearsals Mr. Frank Tours, who had been the musical director in New York.

The cast was good enough; but the show never quite got home. The reception on the first night was friendly; the criticisms were as good as usual; but the revue did not, as so many of my friends told me it would, "make 'em sit up." One or two papers actually complained that the production was not up to the artistic standard which I had set. The *Music Box Revue* ran just over three months; and my personal loss was nearly £8000.

The new Potash and Perlmutter play, *Partners Again*, at the Garrick, went to plenty of laughter, and packed the cheaper parts of the house, but did not fill the stalls.

It was a tantalising show, because occasionally it would spurt and show a little profit, and then the next week would fall off. If a show does real losing business from the start, it is easy to cut your loss at once. If it shows an upward tendency, as did *Partners Again*, one is inclined to give it a chance. I did so, and lost a substantial sum of money.

Now I come to *Anna Christie*, a play I am proud to have introduced to London. Eugène O'Neill is recognised as a world-figure. His name cannot be left out of any list of the six outstanding writers for the theatre. Yet his work is hardly known in England. I had read all O'Neill's published works. I received the script of *Anna Christie* when it was first done in New York. I read it in the train going to Paris. A companion on that journey was Mr. A. B. Walkley, who asked me what I was reading. When I told him, I was surprised to learn that he did not at that time know O'Neill's work for the stage.

It was obvious that an American cast was necessary if *Anna Christie* was to be done in London. From the start I doubted if it could be a commercial success; but reading the play gripped me so much that, when I was in America more than a year later, I went specially to Erie, Pennsylvania, to see it played. I did not let the theatre people know, but bought my seat in the ordinary way and left for New York immediately after the performance, without meeting Miss Pauline Lord, whose performance as *Anna Christie* was one of the events of the year for the thoughtful playgoers of America. More than ever, after seeing the play, superbly produced as it was by Mr. Arthur Hopkins, I felt I should be incurring a great financial risk in bringing it to London, although I had no doubt that Miss Lord would create an enormous impression among lovers of great acting.

In New York I met Mr. Arthur Hopkins, and definite arrangements were made for him to bring the whole production and company to London in the following spring.

Genuine lovers of what is best in the theatre still recall

that first night at the Strand Theatre on 10th April 1923. The completeness with which Pauline Lord merged herself in the character of the hapless *Anna Christie*, even to the restless moving of her foot under the table, sent a wave of admiration through the house. "Quex" in the *Evening News* of the following day related a remark made by a famous Minister's famous private secretary: "This is an historic night in the theatre," he said. It was indeed. Not even the applause that acknowledged the tremendous achievement of Lucien Guitry, when he did "Pasteur" at the Aldwych Theatre, or the enthusiasm that greeted Signora Duse at the New Oxford—that came afterwards—surpassed that first-night ovation to Miss Lord.

I had been a little nervous during the afternoon; I feared both the subdued light and the subdued acting. I sat in the gallery, and near by were some attendants. I listened to their conversation, and heard them say they could not understand a word—so much of the dialogue was in dialect. Nor could they see the facial expression of the actors and actresses.

I asked Mr. Hopkins if he could give us more light in the fog scene, without destroying Mr. Robert Edmond Jones' scenic effect; and I begged him to ask the players to speak up. But Mr. Jones was jealously anxious about the artistic completeness of his stage settings. Mr. Hopkins was afraid of disturbing the realism of the drama by an increased volume of voice. My theory is that, in a theatre, the audience must see and must hear; nothing can excuse failure in either of these two respects.

In the celebrated fog scene it would have been wiser to have let the curtain go up on as thick a fog as the producer liked. As the action of the scene developed, the stage should get lighter. The audience, in the meantime, would still retain a mental impression of the fog and its influence on the drama.

At the end of the first act on that first night, Mr. F. A. H. Eyles, whom I had long known as a journalist, came to me as an envoy from the ladies and gentlemen in the

gallery. They begged me to ask the players to speak up. They had such respect for the artistic sincerity and for the competence of the acting that they hesitated to shout—as ordinarily they would have done—" Speak up." When Mr. Hopkins, after the tumultuous cheering at the conclusion of the play, returned thanks to the audience, the gallery at once told *him* to speak up, and he got in a good-humoured retort : " You are not missing anything this time," he said. " What I am saying is not in the play."

No American actress appearing in London has had such praise from the press as Pauline Lord. She is a modest, retiring woman, and frankly was overcome by the reception given her. The next day interviewers and photographers tried to see her, but she locked herself up. Even I could not get hold of her. She was absolutely sincere when she told me she was too nervous to see anybody. She could not believe that what had happened was true.

Of Miss Lord's performance, Mr. James Agate said in the *Saturday Review* : " Her ' Anna ' is certainly an exquisite performance. Only a highly accomplished artist could have given that suggestion of childlikeness and *canaillerie*, of maiden virtue rudely strumpeted, of a loving heart, and the stare of the streets. Plain, if you like, slight, undistinguished, the actress gave you at her first entrance that indefinable sense of trouble which marks the great players ; and she has the gift of melancholy. When Duse played Marguerite Gauthier she received Armand's love, Lemaître tells us, with a gesture of religious ecstasy quite outside human imagining. Whether Mr. O'Neill intended it or not, this ' Anna ' made a sacrificial offering of the sailor's wooing. Her hard yet frightened assurance, her vehemence when in her scene of passion she allowed the street to come to the surface, her pathos and even her queer fun were alike admirable. And the gesture of humility with which, at the end, she abased her head before her lover was one of the most beautiful I have ever seen."

The press notices had an immediate influence upon the

receipts of *Anna Christie*. Our first full week showed these returns :

Monday Evening	£252	12	0
Tuesday ,,	264	12	0
Wednesday *Matinée*	212	18	3
,, Evening	272	3	3
Thursday Evening	264	7	6
Friday ,,	259	15	0
Saturday *Matinée*	229	1	0
,, Evening	286	2	9
Total	£2041	11	9

These figures were after the deduction of library discount and entertainment tax.

Hundreds of people were turned away nightly from the cheaper parts ; but it was not long before I knew that I was not in for a long run. The enormous volume of praise from the leading critics drew people to the theatre to whom the play was entirely unsympathetic.

People of the " smart set " heard that *Anna Christie* was the " best show in town." They had no idea what they were to see—American crook drama, farce, or burlesque. I could see, in the intervals, that many of them were disappointed ; they were, in fact, bewildered. About 30 per cent. of the audience every night really liked and appreciated the play and the acting.

My wife was in a box with some friends a few nights after *Anna Christie* began its run. Just before the curtain went up on the second act the box opposite was occupied by a certain noble lord, his lady, and a party of friends. They knew my wife's host, and at the end of the second act came over to his box.

" Not very amusing this," said Lord —— ; " if it does not brighten up I shall go after the next act." And he did.

His attitude is perhaps representative of London theatre-going. How could anybody missing the first act of *Anna Christie* follow the play, and be truly interested in it ? Incidentally, the first act of *Anna Christie* was unquestionably the best.

The first week, as I have stated above, the takings were over £2000. The second week they dropped to £1915, the third week to £1670, the fourth week to £1506. The fifth week showed receipts of £1271, the sixth £1404, the seventh £1234, the eighth £1031, the ninth £1014, the tenth £791, and the eleventh £746.

The announcement of the last week, and fresh publicity given by Mr. J. L. Garvin of the *Observer*, brought back the enthusiasm for a last look, and up went the receipts to £1010. But that was the last flutter of interest.

My expenses were, roughly, £1300 a week, so it can be gathered that I failed again as a "commercial manager."

On the second night of *So This is London!* which had a very indifferent press, I had a bet with Mr. Beverley Baxter of the *Sunday Express* that the first completed week of *Anna Christie* would not bring in so much money as the second week of *So This is London!* I lost my "fiver"; but a few weeks later the show at the Prince of Wales did £1832 against the £1404 of *Anna Christie*. And, from that time onwards, *So This is London!* always had a big lead.

Anna Christie proved pretty conclusively that for a high calibre play there is only a limited public in London.

On 4th June 1923 I began at the New Oxford what, perhaps, was the crowning moment of my career as a presenter of stage attractions. I had the Guitrys at night, and Eleonora Duse playing special *matinées*.

Sacha Guitry had promised *L'Amour Masque*, the operette by him for which Messager had written the music; but Yvonne Printemps had found her rôle very arduous at the Paris performance, and had been "off" several times, so I released them from the obligation of doing the operette in London. That was a disappointment; but the family contributed a splendid repertoire. It was a delight to see Lucien playing with his son and daughter-in-law in Sacha's merry comedy *Le Veilleur de Nuit*. Sacha, unfortunately, had an accident getting out of his car, and for a whole week had to alter his programme, substituting for one of his plays the telling of a batch of amusing stories—he told

PHOTOGRAPH OF A PAINTING OF ELEANORA DUSE

Presented to Mrs. Cochran by Signora Duse.

them sitting in a chair, and his wife sang songs charmingly. The receipts for this season exceeded those of my previous Guitry Seasons at the Princes and the Aldwych. The Guitrys were very pleased with the New Oxford as a theatre, and said they hoped that when I presented them again it would be at this theatre.

On the day that *Anna Christie* was produced at the Strand Theatre I received a telegram informing me that Signora Duse would like to play six *matinées* in London under my management, and she invited me to make her an offer. For several years I had tried to induce her to play in London, without success. An arrangement was concluded by the exchange of a few telegrams, and the next I knew was that Duse had arrived in Paris, and was breaking her journey there. I went to Paris to meet her, and, with my wife, travelled with her to London.

The great actress seemed very delicate and very frail. When she passed from the train to the boat I was struck with the way she shrank from crowds. She trembled from head to foot. On the train from Folkestone, as she could not bear the smoke from cigars and cigarettes, she sat in the corridor on a seat improvised from a travelling portmanteau. I confess that until then I had not realised that these boat-train Pullmans contain no compartments where smoking is prohibited. Duse made no complaint ; but again I noticed that the presence of crowds distressed her.

When we reached Victoria there were people to meet her. A representative of the Italian Embassy was on the platform, and Miss Christopher St. John, who presented a bouquet on behalf of Miss Ellen Terry ; and Miss Pauline Lord, who handed her another floral tribute on behalf of herself and of the company that was playing *Anna Christie.* Duse seemed particularly touched by the compliment paid her by Ellen Terry.

" Give her a kiss from me," she said to Miss St. John. " Tell her I will write to her."

She drove away with Miss Onslow, an old friend, to

Claridge's Hotel, and next morning I had a note telling me to reserve a box for Ellen Terry.

Duse gave Ibsen's *The Lady from the Sea, Ghosts,* and a play previously unknown here, *Cosi Sia* ("Thy Will be Done"). At every *matinée* she cast a spell over her audience.

It was a great satisfaction to me that London responded so splendidly to the call of the great Italian actress. Every seat was sold at every *matinée.* Playgoers were eager to pay a guinea for seats in the back row. Every afternoon there was a memorable ovation.

James Agate said: "The voice seemed to me to be just as exquisite as ever; the arms, with their grave dance, eked out the old insufficiency of words; the face, in moments of emotion, lit up from within as though a lime had been thrown upon it. There was the old, ineffable grace, the childish importunacy, the raising of human dignity to a power undreamt of. The long second act was a symphony for the voice, but to me the scene of greatest marvel was the third act. In this Duse scaled incredible heights. There is one moment when, drawn by every fibre of her being to the unknown irresistible of the Stranger and the sea, she blots herself behind her husband and takes courage from his hand. Here terror and ecstasy sweep over her face with that curious effect which this actress alone knows—as though this were not present stress, but havoc remembered of past time. Her features have the placidity of long grief; so many storms have broken over them that nothing can disturb again this sea of calm distress. If there be in acting such a thing as pure passion divorced from the body, yet expressed in terms of the body, it is here. Now and again in this strange play, Duse would seem to pass beyond our ken, and where she has been there is only a fragrance, and a sound in our ears, like water flowing under the stars."

After the first *matinée* Duse was exhausted, and said she wished to see nobody. But, when I told her that Ellen Terry was waiting to see her, she came out of her room, flung her arms around Miss Terry's neck, and embraced her. Both of them burst into joyous laughter,

almost danced, and then cried. I and those who were with me were deeply touched ; we turned away to allow these two great apostles of beauty to exchange confidences.

My box during the season was a refuge for distinguished folk unable to secure seats. One afternoon I had Miss Terry, Sir Squire Bancroft, Miss Pauline Lord, Mr. J. L. Garvin, the Hon. Maurice Baring, Mr. George Jean Nathan, the American critic, and Miss Fay Compton. Miss Compton was so overcome that she thought she would be unable to play that night. Miss Eve le Gallienne had a back seat one afternoon. She begged me to let her sit on the floor near the front—which I did.

Nothing in my career has given me such proud satisfaction as this Duse Season. Apart from the gratification of arranging an undoubted success, I had the privilege of watching Duse at every performance from beginning to end from the best box of the theatre.

I remember Serge Diaghileff telling me that his was the most perfect existence in the world. " It is true," he said, " I have never had any money in the bank. But I visit all the capitals of Europe during their best seasons ; I stay at the best hotels ; and, above all, I can see the Russian Ballet every night without paying for it."

I felt something like this when I saw people with money to burn being turned away from the Duse *matinées* because the theatre was so full. None of my mementoes do I prize more highly than the photographs with their gracious inscriptions given me by Eleonora Duse, and her letters, the last of which reads :

> " *Je vous remercie* et de tout cœur. *Tout* a été bien et je suis *heureuse* d'etre chez vous."

When, one afternoon, there gathered upon the stage of the New Oxford Theatre Lucien, Sacha, and Yvonne Guitry, Chaliapine, and Eleonora Duse, I could not but think of the changes I had wrought in this old music-hall. What varied offerings I had presented on that stage ! I had even had Mr. Howard Carter lecturing on the Tomb

of Tut-ankh-Amen, and Dr. M'Govern telling how he got to Lhasa in disguise.

But though the outside world, looking at the extent, the variety, and the apparent success of my enterprises in this year of 1923, might think that I was a prosperous as well as a venturesome man, the accountant's figures told a different tale. Despite the success of the Guitry and Duse Seasons, the early summer of 1923 was disastrous to me. Instead of having improved my financial position by the plays which I brought back from America, I was at times losing as much as £2000 per week.

My last production at the London Pavilion was *Dover Street to Dixie*, an entertainment I introduced mainly to introduce Florence Mills and the clever coloured comedians from the New York night resort "The Plantation." Sir Alfred Butt, having tried through Mr. Albert de Courville to secure this company, brought over some negroes in an entertainment which was called *Plantation Days*. I had taken a long journey to see this troupe in Indianapolis, and found little merit in them—their services could be obtained for less than one-third of the price I had to pay Florence Mills and company. I was not surprised when, on their first appearance in an Empire revue, they were hissed—so utterly did they fail. Unfortunately, too, they were presented in London before Florence Mills and her fellow-artists, and their failure created a prejudice against coloured performers that only exceptional artists could overcome.

I have never known in a theatre so tense a feeling as that which marked the first performance of *Dover Street to Dixie*.

The "Dover Street" or "white part" of the revue was received almost in silence. Stanley Lupino, an experienced comedian, not getting welcoming laughs at his first appearance, got his tail down, and didn't show his best form. And there was an indication of the feeling of the audience at the end of the overture. It didn't get a hand. Generally the friendly feeling pervading a theatre on a

FLORENCE MILLS

Bracketed by Charles B. Cochran with Yvette Guilbert and Raquel Meller as one of the truly great artists of the Song with a Story.

first night results in a little outburst at the end of the overture, more because the curtain is going up than on account of the music which has been played. Right through the first part of the revue this dull feeling rested upon the audience. They seemed to be holding themselves in until the " darkies " appeared.

The coloured part of the show began with the spirited exciting music played by Will Vodery's orchestra. Then the chorus dashed on, then Miss Edith Wilson sang a lively number with the chorus frantically dancing. Whatever members of the audience who were going to object to " coloured shows " might have planned by way of demonstration had, up to this point, no opportunity even of making itself heard. But when Florence Mills made her first entrance Vodery's musicians were playing soft dreamy music. And after her first few notes I said to Eddie Dolly, who was sitting next to me, " She owns the house—no audience in the world can resist that ! " She sang a plaintive song about the dreamy hills of Tennessee. She controlled the emotions of the audience as only a true artist can. There was a heart-throb in her bird-like voice that brought a lump to the throat. Then her eyes would flash. Her thin, lithe arms and legs became animated with a dancing delirium. It was all natural art. There was not a false note in any part of her performance. And the audience applauded as any audience applauds an artist in whom it detects genius. That night, and every night she appeared at the London Pavilion, Florence Mills received an ovation each time she came on the stage—before every song she sang. That is a tribute which in my experience I have never known to be offered to any other artist. In my humble opinion Florence Mills is one of the greatest artists of our time. She idealises the peculiar sadness and the aspirations of the black race. She can stir an audience more even than Raquel Meller can.

On account of its novelty, the success of the coloured portion of *Dover Street to Dixie* rather overbalanced the first part of the revue. The highbrow weeklies went into

transports over the coloured players, and made rather unfair comparisons. The *Nation*, for instance, concluded an article of superlative praise for the negroes with the paragraph: "I could not help uneasily wondering what must have been the feelings of the coloured performers as they stood waiting in the wings and watching the performance of their entirely colourless overlords. A little more of this, and a rising of the plantations cannot be long postponed." Said the *New Statesman*, "Dixie is delightful from beginning to end. The actors are among the cleverest, brightest, freshest people who have amused London for a long time." Basil Maine, in a column article in the *Telegraph*, exhorted concert singers "to sit at the feet of the Plantation Company. There was," he said, "behind their performance a principle which can convert an ordinary vocal recital at the Æolian Hall into a glowing event."

This article was brought to me by one of the coloured performers.

"What's this guy raving about?" he said. "It 'pears to me he's gone plum crazy, and I don't know whether he just loves us or hates us to death." The language of the music critic was Greek to him.

One night Mr. Hugh McIntosh, the Australian, and myself gave the coloured company a party at the Piccadilly Hotel. There were very few white people present.

Will Vodery brought his full band, and gave extraordinary examples of most advanced orchestration. Vodery, by the way, studied music in Paris. Eugène Goossens and other musicians who can claim to speak have told me that Vodery has no equal in the orchestration of syncopated music.

Florence Mills and the coloured performers never forgot that party. Mr. Lew Leslie, their producer, told me they were wild with excitement when in November of the same year they heard that I had arrived in New York. It would give them the chance to have a return party. With the co-operation of Mr. Sam Salvin, the proprietor of

" The Plantation," a special performance was given, and I was asked to invite as many friends as I liked. And at this party were Lady Diana Duff-Cooper, Alice Delysia, Trini, Ida Adams, Pearl White, Kay Laurell, Gertie Lawrence, Beatrice Lillie, Madame Frances, the New York *couturière*, Olga Lynn, Nelson Keys, Archie Selwyn, and Morris Gest. One dance, done by Florence Mills in a Russian uniform with two men, struck me as being as great in its way as Pavlova's " Swan Dance."

Although *Dover Street to Dixie* was in the bill at the London Pavilion when the hot weather was wrecking the takings at the majority of the London theatres, our receipts ran as high as £3200 ; and, when I withdrew the revue at the end of August, we were playing to £2400 a week. My expenses were exceedingly heavy, but I could have continued to run the revue at a profit had it not been for the interference of the Ministry of Labour in regard to the coloured artists. I was tired of fighting against conditions, and as my general losses that summer were getting no smaller I sought relief by securing as tenants for the London Pavilion The Famous Players Picture Company at a definite rental. That gave me time to look around. I look forward to bringing Florence Mills to London again. Truly a very great artiste.

Meanwhile I had launched Mr. George M. Cohan's *Little Nellie Kelly* at the Oxford, and it was doing well. It helped June to make a further advance, and it gave opportunities to other young performers, more especially to Anita Elson, Roy Royston, and Sonnie Hale. Sonnie Hale had started with me in the chorus of *Fun of the Fayre*. He was exceedingly willing, and I had singled him out for future opportunity. There was a rehearsal of *Fun of the Fayre* at which he was chosen to do a bit of business with Mitty preparatory to her " Jealousy " dance with Tillio—a slight thing, but difficult for an inexperienced youth. He tried two or three times rather awkwardly, and unthinking members of the company laughed. I reprimanded them, and told Sonnie Hale not to be discouraged ; honest

trying was never a case for laughter. Young Hale was very grateful. I sent him on tour, where he gained a lot of experience, and he came back properly equipped for the rather difficult part I gave him in *Little Nellie Kelly*.

Little Nellie Kelly had the great advantage of being rehearsed by Mr. George M. Cohan himself. Mr. Cohan had generously given me *So This is London!* and the musical play, without any advance royalties. He had sent his stage director, John Meehan, to rehearse *So This is London!* and had come over himself to produce *Little Nellie Kelly*. He refused to charge for Meehan's services, and I certainly could not have found enough money to pay for his own. Mr. Cohan is one of the geniuses of the theatre. Nobody knew better than he that *Little Nellie Kelly* was slight stuff, but, put together and played as he directed it, it was "sure fire." Many Cohan pieces have been ruined in production over here.

He would say at rehearsals: "There are only half a dozen laughs in this play, and if you cheat the audience of one, we're sunk!" He infused my company with the Cohan spirit, and the first performance was a revelation to a British audience. The speed and crispness of it set a fashion; but it is a model not easily followed. Cohans are rare. Mr. S. R. Littlewood described the "belle" of the New Oxford as "the best thing since *The Belle of New York*."

During its run I made a slight change in prices, which had the result of packing the theatre anew. The play could unquestionably have run through the summer. It was playing to big business when I took it off. There was a moment when the box-office returns made me doubt the length of the run, so I took the opportunity of letting the theatre some months ahead, arranging to remove *Nellie Kelly* with the full London company for a run in Manchester. It had an even greater success in Manchester than in London. The Manchester success was particularly amusing to me, because one of our most respected dramatic critics, one for whom I have a great regard, not only in his professional

capacity but as a friend, predicted dreadful things should the play be presented in Manchester, Bradford, or Brixton. "It is," he wrote, "one of the unsolved things of the theatre that a piece will do riotously well in the West End, and will be utterly useless in the provinces or in the suburbs."

The last night of *Little Nellie Kelly* at the Palace, Manchester, was like the last night of some enormously successful pantomime. And pantomime means much more in the life of Birmingham, Manchester, and Newcastle than it does in London. The local press described it as "a remarkable production." "The principals and chorus," said the *Manchester Evening News*, "begin a sort of war dance, which quickens every moment until the whole stage is filled with figures frantically writhing and swinging and leaping in a perfect delirium of frenzied excitement. This raging avalanche grew in volume until the infection of its furious tumult spread to the audience, and they literally roared their enthusiasm at the close."

By the autumn of 1923 my affairs had reached a crisis. It was almost impossible for me to carry on.

One of my largest but most friendly creditors, Messrs. James Willing, the advertising agents, called a meeting of my other creditors. After a most kindly introduction by Mr. Churchill, a director of Messrs. Willings, I explained my position to the meeting, and begged for a year's grace, during which time I hoped that I might be able to restore my fortunes. The proposal was almost unanimously accepted; but there were one or two firms represented by individuals who had not the authority to agree to give me the time I asked for. Although these representatives did not actually consent to the year's grace, there was a general understanding that I should be given a chance to continue with my work.

I was most anxious to avoid bankruptcy. Although possibly I had been guilty of bad judgment in some of my ventures, it was agreed that I had been a victim of a run of bad luck. The amount of my indebtedness did not seem an impossible load for me to carry. I had made huge

sums before, and I felt that, with a good " break," I might do so again. It was useless, I felt, to try and redeem my fortunes by small measures. I was not embarrassed by any unlet theatres. I had lost most of them, and had no personal responsibility in regard to any. I was still the chairman and managing director of the Palace, and managing director of a company controlling the " Oxford," and the " Pavilion," which, for several years, I had financed entirely by myself.

I had conceived the idea of a Rodeo or Cowboy Championships for the Stadium at Wembley. Having secured financial support for the project, besides coming to an arrangement with the British Empire Exhibition, I set out for America and Canada to find the men and the animals for the great tournament.

That the thrill of these daring contests would appeal to the British public I had but little doubt. The greatest difficulty was to convince the public of the genuineness of the competitions. I believe I was successful. Should there be any doubt, let me state once again that there were no paid contestants other than the trick riders and the rope spinners. All the cowboys were dependent for their earnings upon the award of the judges.

There was some complaint from the Canadians who were not successful ; but, without pretending to know all the finer points illustrated by the contests, it seemed to me—and I watched them daily—that the judging was done in the fairest possible manner. One of the judges, Tom Hickman, Captain of the Texas Rangers, was one of the straightest, finest men it has been my privilege ever to meet ; I am confident he would be incapable of an unfair deal. He was what the cowboys call " a square shooter."

For Tex Austin, who organised the competitions, I have nothing but esteem. I found him in every way an honourable man.

The opening performance of the Rodeo drew an enormous crowd, and success seemed assured. The later happenings

CARICATURE OF CHARLES B. COCHRAN AT THE TIME OF THE RODEO

are too recent to make recapitulation necessary. The tragic part of it all to me is that I put in six months' hard work without a penny profit.

When I discussed the idea with Tex Austin in New York several years ago, he pointed out to me that the cost of the undertaking made it an almost prohibitive proposition for England; but I believed that the British Empire Exhibition provided the right opportunity, and I was nearly, but not quite, right.

It is curious that a spectacle involving so large an outlay should neither lose nor make. Any experienced showman would have bet that the venture would have made or lost about £50,000, whereas it came out as near even as makes no difference.

There were many circumstances that militated against my pocketing the profit which would have made my financial position secure once more. It was a gambler's last coup. I was all out to win; but I lost.

Almost before the end of the Rodeo some of my creditors began pressing their claims, although those who had known and dealt with me for years never worried me. Finally the fateful step was taken, and I have been forced into membership of the Carey Street Club.

Charles Frohman said that so long as you did not lose your last chip you were always in the game. That is the fascination of the show business. I have lost my last chip; but I hope that by writing these reminiscences I have begun to earn the humble "ante" that will get me into the great game again.

To Major Montague Gluckstein I owe my restart. Immediately my position became known he offered me, on behalf of Messrs. J. Lyons & Company, my first opportunity to commence making money again by producing a show in the Trocadero Grill-room. This was indeed practical friendship, and I shall ever be grateful.

I am a few years older than when I started; but I have a good deal more knowledge, certainly more imagination, and I have not lost courage. There is a thrill about

starting life all over again with retrieving one's fortunes as the goal. The lucky numbers turned up when Sydney Price and I were down and out in Chicago at the time of the World's Fair. They turned up again for me thirty years afterwards at San Sebastian. I believe another run of success is due for me in the theatre business.

When first I started I had no one to aid me. Now, with few exceptions, every one seems to conspire to help me. If I can right myself my misfortunes will have been worth while, because my bad time has discovered to me what goodwill and friendship there is in the world. Offers of help of every kind have come from all manner of friends, known and unknown. Loyalty and friendship have been demonstrated to me in the most practical way by such great-hearted friends as Alice Delysia and the Dolly Sisters. In an effort to save the wreck they offered me everything they had in the world.

In the summer of 1923, knowing the bad times I was passing through, Mr. Archie Selwyn, Mr. Sam Harris, Mr. Al Woods, Mr. Irving Berlin, and Mr. David Belasco of America all came to my aid financially. My wife and I are under the deepest debt of gratitude to Mr. Selwyn.

I am also under a debt of eternal gratitude to Mr. A. E. Abrahams, the owner of so many theatres. Without his generous treatment of me a new start would be doubly difficult.

Soon after the news of my bankruptcy became public I attended a *répétition générale* in Paris. There I met eminent players, authors, publishers, and managers. They all offered me not only sympathy, but practical help. Also I cannot but be grateful for the sympathetic way in which the press have dealt with the unpleasant subject which they were in duty bound to record. I look to the future. It is full of promise.

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